

# THE ARGOSY.

OCTOBER, 1896.

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## THE MISTRESS OF BRAE FARM.

BY ROSA NOUCHETTE CAREY.

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### CHAPTER XLI.

"IT IS ONLY DATES."

ELLISON was somewhat taken aback when she saw Lorraine waiting for her on the platform; she had been looking forward to the long drive home with Gavin; but she grew very pale as she read his note. Gavin's mother, bright genial Cousin Louise, was very dear to her. Her first words as the brougham drove off from the station door were: "I ought not to have gone, we were both too sanguine;" and in a voice of deeper distress: "All my life I shall be sorry for this, that you were there and not I."

She meant no unkindness by this speech, and Lorraine did not misunderstand her; nevertheless she winced in the darkness; it was not her fault that she had been obliged to take Ellison's place—that Colonel Trevor's mother had died literally in her arms—that it had been her mission to comfort and strengthen him. Ellison said no more; most likely she felt that words were futile and inadequate at such moments. She leant back in the carriage and shed quiet tears, while Lorraine, alert and miserable, watched the dark winding of the road. Why was imagination so pitiless? Why was she compelled to recall against her will those minutes when she had stood silently beside him in the library with that tightening grasp upon her dress? She had had no wish to move, and yet it had given her a strange feeling of embarrassment to be so detained. If Ellison had been in her place—and then for one brief instant she seemed to picture it all; she could see them going upstairs hand in hand, and standing together by the dead woman's side. Ellison

would have the right to comfort him, she—— But here Lorraine checked herself. Where were her thoughts carrying her? Was it any business of hers? She grew hot and then cold. How interminable the drive seemed to her as well as to Ellison.

Ellison went straight to Brae House, but Lorraine begged to be set down before they reached the lodge. She walked through the dark meadow, finding her way with difficulty. Once an instinctive sense of danger made her pause; in the darkness she had strayed from the path and was at the edge of the pond; another step and she would have been in the water. Ellison, preoccupied with her inner sad thoughts, had forgotten to warn her; all the inhabitants of the Farm carried lanterns when they crossed the Brae meadow. Lorraine shuddered as she retraced her steps; her nerves had experienced a shock, but there was no warm glow of thankfulness in her heart for a peril escaped. What if she had died the same death as her boy, would it have been so terrible after all? They would have known how it happened, that in the darkness she had stumbled into the pond; she would have been too confused to find her way out, and her heavy fur-lined cloak would have dragged her down. It was not the death she would have chosen—the icy water on a winter's evening—but was life so sweet to her that she cared to preserve it? She had good friends, but was she absolutely necessary to any human being? Perhaps Muriel would miss her most, but Ellison would have her lover to console her. Lorraine was in a strangely abnormal state, or she would not have harrowed up her feelings by imagining the tragedy; her sweet, wholesome nature had been crushed by trouble, and had not yet recovered its healthy tone; her nerves were not in order either, for a dark figure coming close to her in the lane made her scream. Dorcas, who was at the side door, ran out to her.

"It is only Bates, ma'am," she said hurriedly, "George Bates who works in the stables at Brae House; he ought to be ashamed of himself for startling you in this way"—raising her voice purposely—but the man took no notice, and went in. "He knows he has no call to be loafing about our place;" and Dorcas spoke in a tone of deep resentment.

"Oh, it was Bates, was it?" returned Lorraine with a little laugh. "I thought it was a tipsy man, for he lurched against me, but I suppose it was the darkness," and then she gave another little laugh strangely unmirthful—first the pond and then George Bates.

Dorcas tossed her pretty little head as she turned up the lamp and stirred the fire into a cheerful blaze. Lorraine sank down in an easy-chair and let the girl wait on her. Dorcas removed her wraps, and brought her a cup of hot coffee, and warmed her slippers.

"Dear heart-mine, your feet are like ice!" she exclaimed; "and your boots are sopping wet."

"I went a little too near the pond, Dorcas," returned Lorraine

wearily; but her tone was so matter of fact that the girl took no alarm.

"Drat that fellow," she was saying to herself as she knelt in the firelight rubbing Lorraine's feet. All the servants at Brae Farm loved to wait on Mrs. Herbert. Poor Dorcas had some cause for her displeasure. George Bates was her *bête noir*. Two years ago he had been in Ellison's service, but she had dismissed him on account of a flagrant act of disobedience. The man had complained to Colonel Trevor, and had been so plausible in his excuses that he had been induced to take him on as a stable helper.

"He is a clever fellow, and I think Williams will find him useful," he had said to Ellison, but she had shaken her head incredulously.

"Bates is a ne'er-do-weel," she said decidedly. "Oh, he is clever enough, but I am afraid you will repent your soft-heartedness, Gavin. Sam Brattle begged me more than once to dismiss him, as he and Joe Brand got on so badly together. He has given us no end of trouble; he has taken a fancy to Dorcas's rosy cheeks, and pesters the poor girl with his attentions. She will have nothing to say to him, and very rightly too, for his character is none of the best, if we are to believe Sam."

"Give a dog a bad name and hang him; that is what all you good women do," grumbled Gavin obstinately. "I don't believe there is much harm about the fellow, though he does not hit Dorcas's fancy. I told him I would give him a month's trial, so I must keep my word."

"Very well; only make him understand that he is to keep away from Brae Farm," returned Ellison with a good-natured shrug at Gavin's perversity. She never argued with him; one day he would come round to her opinion and repent of his misplaced clemency, and then she would be magnanimous and not crow over him.

George Bates had kept his place at Brae House ever since, and Williams assured his master that he was a decent fellow and earned his wages. "He understands horses as well as I do myself, colonel," he answered, "and I have never seen the stables in better order. Davis will tell you the same. He is a bit surly at times, but none of us takes any notice. I suppose most of us have our tempers."

So George Bates kept his place; but unfortunately for Dorcas's peace of mind, he still sneaked down to the Farm. Dorcas could not be induced to listen to him; she detested the very sight of him. "I hope I shall do better than that, or I would sooner be a servant to the end of my days," she would say to Mrs. Drake. "The idea of my keeping company with a surly, ill-conditioned fellow like Bates." But alas! Bates could not be made to take a final no. He was in grim earnest; he had good wages, he had given up drinking at the *Waggon and Horses*, he had a tidy cottage, and he was bent on having a wife; and all Dorcas's contemptuous speeches

and head-tosses could not prevent him from loafing about the farmyard.

"They are all a bit skittish at first," he said to Davis in a moment of confidence, as they smoked their pipes together in the stable-yard. "It is just like that new mare of the Colonel's; she is a bit playful and stand-offish, but she has got no vice."

"There I differ, Bates," returned the groom; "me and Williams don't hold that opinion at all. She is not exactly nasty tempered, but she is nervous, and a trifle upsets her. I hope the Colonel won't drive that mare when he goes out with Miss Lee. Williams said to me, the day Madge Wildfire came home, 'She is awkward and touchy, and I don't half like the looks of her.' These were Williams's very words."

"Then Williams is a duffer, and you are another, Davis," returned Bates crossly. "Do you think the Colonel cannot judge a horse's temper by this time? he is no chicken, and knows a thing or two. But there—when you and Williams get a maggot in your heads there is no contradicting you," and Bates laid down his pipe in a dudgeon, and went into the stables to attend to the maligned animal.

"I know some one who is awkward and touchy too," muttered Davis with a grin. "They are about a pair of them, Madge Wildfire and Bates," and then he strolled off to his cottage.

Lorraine kept her own counsel and said nothing about the pond and George Bates. Ellison had quite enough to worry her just then, and was less observant than usual of her cousin's looks; it was natural that Gavin's trouble should occupy her, and she was grateful to Lorraine for discharging her household tasks, and so setting her free to be with him. Lorraine herself spent an hour or two daily with Muriel—who continued utterly prostrate—but she saw nothing of Colonel Trevor. During the funeral she remained closely shut up in the turret-room; but Ellison took her rightful place that day, and her deep mourning was more for the mother-in-law than for the cousin.

"It is a blessing the Colonel has Miss Lee to look after him, now the mistress has gone," remarked Mrs. Crane, the housekeeper, to her crony, Mrs. Williams; for all the household were slightly contemptuous of Miss Muriel's fads.

"What does she want with all that book-learning and those outlandish languages, when she has not her living to get," remarked Mrs. Williams. "I don't hold with so much learning myself; why, Williams was only saying this morning that Miss Muriel has a good fifteen thousand of her own. She is no beauty, as he says, and is a sickly body at the best of times; but fifteen thousand is not to be despised, and many a man would be glad to have her;" and to this Mrs. Crane agreed.

In the servants' hall there was plenty of plain speaking. They



had dearly loved their kindly, genial mistress; but human nature delights in every form of excitement, and the stately funeral with its long line of private carriages fell to be a great consolation. That evening, though Mrs. Crane's eyes were red with the tears she had shed since morning, there was a subdued cheerfulness in her voice as she and Mrs. Williams discussed the probable date of the Colonel's wedding; and the opinion was general that Miss Muriel—poor, dear, young lady—would live at the Farm with Mrs. Herbert. The idea had originated with Mrs. Crane, and had been received with acclamations.

Christmas Day was spent as quietly as possible at Brae House and Brae Farm; the usual feasting was carried on in the servants' halls, but the brother and sister dined alone. Muriel had proposed that Ellison should join them; she thought the *tête-a-tête* dinner might be too oppressive to Gavin, but he negatived this at once. Mrs. Herbert could not be left alone; he wondered that Muriel should propose such a thing. They must get through the day as best they could. Gavin spoke with unusual irritability, but Muriel for once had tact, and held her peace.

Finally, Ellison of her own accord suggested that she and Lorraine should walk up to Brae after dinner. It would make a break in the day for Gavin; and Muriel thankfully agreed.

Lorraine pleaded to be left at home, but Ellison would not hear of this.

"If you stay at home, I shall remain too," she replied with calm decision; and Lorraine felt herself obliged to yield.

Gavin's countenance was a little inscrutable when Muriel informed him of Ellison's thoughtfulness.

"They will come up to coffee; it will make such a nice break in the long evening," she said; but Gavin made no reply to this. In his heart he thought even the long, monotonous evening alone with Muriel would have been more conducive to his comfort. He had not seen Mrs. Herbert for a fortnight, but he too had remembered far too vividly those silent minutes in the library.

Ellison thought Gavin more restless and out of spirits than ever that evening; as they sat together at one end of the long softly-lighted room, she noticed that he was unusually absent; and that more than once he answered her at random; but her manner only grew more tender.

## CHAPTER XLII.

## MADGE WILDFIRE.

THE following afternoon Lorraine and her faithful escort, Tweed, walked rapidly up the Bramfield road. It was hardly a day for a long country walk, the wind was intensely cold and nipping, and Sam Brattle had informed them that morning that there would be a fall of snow before night.

When Lorraine announced her intention of walking to Bramfield, Ellison had tried gently to dissuade her. "These long solitary walks are not good for you," she said in her sensible way; "if they exhilarated and refreshed you, I would not say a word, but you always come back so dead tired."

"One must be either tired or restless," returned Lorraine rather impatiently. Ellison's kind solicitude only vexed her. "How is she to understand?" she said to herself as she left the room: "if one had pleasant thoughts, it would be easy to sit by the fireside: but that bright, cheerful room seems to stifle me. I suffer less when I am battling with the wind, and even the greyiness that Ellison thinks so dismal seems to soothe me."

But one hour later Lorraine was forced to own that she would have been wise to have taken Ellison's advice and stayed quietly at home—the bitter wind seemed to lash her mercilessly as she toiled down the long roads; never in her life had she felt such cold, and particles of snow were already beginning to fall, Tweed's black coat was powdered with them as he stalked on bravely by his mistress's side.

Lorraine was beginning to wish herself at home—that softly lighted room with its glowing fire and circle of easy-chairs seemed unusually alluring. In another half hour Ruth would be drawing the heavy curtains over the window, and the lamps would be lighted. It was early still, but the afternoon was unusually sombre. Lorraine was beginning to fear that the darkness would overtake her, and yet it was impossible to walk faster in the teeth of such a wind. Perhaps she was not as strong as she used to be; her breath seemed shorter, and her legs ached terribly. Now and then she stood still to recover herself, and during one of these pauses she heard the sound of wheels coming rapidly behind her. Fearing recognition—for probably it was someone from Price's Folly—she walked on as quickly as she could, but the next moment a familiar voice arrested her.

"Mrs. Herbert, what on earth has brought you all this distance? it is not fit for a dog to be out. Do you know that a snowstorm is coming on?" Colonel Trevor's tone was remonstrant, almost

displeased, as he checked his spirited mare and bade Bates go to her head.

"I wanted a walk, but I never thought it would be as bad as this," she stammered; "but I am making all the haste I can; please drive on, Colonel Trevor, your mare seems fidgety," for Madge Wildfire was backing the phaeton on to the path in rather an alarming manner.

"She does not like standing; keep her steady for a moment, Bates, while Mrs. Herbert gets in. Good heavens!" rather irritably, as Lorraine timidly drew back and shook her head, "do you suppose I am going to drive on and leave you two miles from home with a snow-storm impending?"

"I would much rather walk," returned Lorraine with a pleading look; she had the greatest reluctance to be driven home by Colonel Trevor. Ellison would think it so strange, and then she was a little afraid of the mare; she did not like the way she laid back her ears and lifted her feet. "Do let me walk," she finished a little tamely.

"If you walk I shall walk too," replied Gavin, throwing down the reins with an impatient frown; women, even the best of them, could try a man's patience, he thought, for he was not in the best of tempers. Mrs. Herbert was not behaving with her usual good sense this afternoon; any child could have seen that a snowstorm was coming on, even he found the wind cruelly cutting, and how was a delicate woman to brave it with impunity? He had no right to coerce her, but if she chose to persist in her foolhardiness he must keep her company, that was all.

Lorraine gave a little cry as she saw him prepare to spring to the ground. She had no chance of getting her own way; his will was stronger than hers. "Don't jump down, Colonel Trevor!" she exclaimed. "I will do as you wish—if—if you are sure the mare is safe."

"She is safe enough," he answered shortly, and then Lorraine clambered into the high phaeton; Gavin tucked the fur-lined rug round her; the soft warmth was very grateful to her. Tweed gave a reproachful whine, and his tail drooped disconsolately—he was left in the cold; then Bates gave the mare her head, and she started with a playful plunge or two, Tweed jumping up and barking beside her. "Don't be afraid, Madge is only in a hurry to get to her stable," observed Gavin, as he noticed the startled look in Lorraine's eyes. "There is no vice in her, but, like the rest of her sex, she needs a strong hand." And then his voice changed into reproachful tenderness as he stooped to adjust the rug more comfortably. "Is this the way you take care of yourself, Mrs. Herbert? Have you no regard for your health? I wonder Ellison allows you to do these mad things."

In spite of her nervousness, an amused smile came to Lorraine's lips. "Ellison and I have agreed to bear with each other's little

idiosyncrasies," she replied. "Neither of us could endure control. Ellison looked at me in a shocked way when I told her I was going out. She evidently thought me crazy."

"No wonder; you have gone down ten per cent. in my opinion. I used to think you a sensible woman, Mrs. Herbert. I never imagined you could have behaved so recklessly. Do you set no value on your health? One has to live, you know, so one may as well grease the chariot wheels. I could not believe my eyes when I saw you just now, but of course I recognised my old friend Tweed; it was no business of mine, but I felt tremendously angry—I do still."

"Angry with me?" Poor misguided Lorraine, those curt, displeased sentences were sweet as the softest music to her ears; he cared enough for her, then, to scold her for her recklessness; never had she seen him so put out. The calm, suave Colonel Trevor was unmistakably out of temper.

"Yes, I am angry with you," turning round with a keen, pleading glance. "I am angry and hurt that you have so little regard for your friends; that you are trying to kill yourself. Oh, there are a hundred ways of committing suicide," as she stared at him with wide-open eyes; "it is not always sudden. There are slow processes—over-fatigue, cold, want of patience with your life—a cowardly refusal to endure your troubles; oh, one can go on enumerating for ever: but," his voice again breaking into tenderness—"I could never have believed that you—you could have done such things."

What Lorraine would have answered she never knew, for at that moment the hideous braying of a lonely donkey from a field near proved too much for Madge Wildfire's nerves. The uncouth grey monster in the distance had disturbed her from a delicious vision of her warm stall and the crisp, toothsome oats that awaited her. Madge's four feet seemed in the air at once as she plunged madly across the road, and then back against a heap of flint stones. In another instant the phaeton was overturned, and Gavin, scrambling out of a deep ditch, saw to his horror that Mrs. Herbert, who had been flung into the road, was still lying motionless and inert, with Tweed licking her face.

The mare was still on her feet, and Bates, who was unhurt, had her firmly by the head, but the phaeton was on its side against the heap of stones. A cold sweat of agony broke out on Gavin's brow as he knelt down by Lorraine; his hands shook as though with the palsy as he raised her head on his arm. How white her face looked, and her eyes were closed. Good heavens, if he had killed her! In the anguish of that fear he lost all self-control.

"Oh, my darling, my darling! have I killed you?" he exclaimed, in a low but audible voice of intense emotion. "Speak to me, Lorraine—one word—or I shall go mad. Let me see your sweet eyes, if only for an instant. Do you hear me, darling?" And, alas!

for her own peace of mind, Lorraine had heard every word. The shock had stunned her for a moment, but she had not wholly lost consciousness. She had felt Tweed's rough tongue licking her face, and had recognised Gavin's touch. "Darling, darling—just one word!" But how was she to answer him? His voice thrilled through and through her as she lay there with her cheek against his coat sleeve. The next minute she felt his lips upon her hair, and then she tried to rise.

"Let me get up. I am not hurt, only stunned," she whispered, and his "Thank God!" was distinctly audible to her. Gavin said no more as he assisted her to rise, and guided her gently to a fallen trunk. For the moment the bliss of hearing her voice, of knowing that she was alive and unhurt, prevented him from entertaining any embarrassing recollections.

"Sit there while I get the phaeton up," he said, in the same moved tones; and then he wrapped the warm rug tenderly round her and left her.

Life was still precious to him, must always be precious as long as she lived beside him. That instant of mutual danger had lifted his love into a higher plane. She could never be his, his faith was pledged to another woman; but as long as her slender feet walked this earth he would not refuse comfort. Loss, disappointment, was no new thing to him—the furnace of affliction had been heated sevenfold when he had stood in the light of the Indian moon beside his wife's grave. Meanwhile Lorraine sat shivering and huddled up in the fur-rug. She was still a little dizzy from the shock. Had she been dreaming? But no, it was far too real—those broken sentences, the agitated tone, and the gleam of tenderness in the deep-set eyes, had revealed the truth to Lorraine. She, and not Ellison, was the beloved of his heart.

And then a curious thing happened; for the same instant that she grasped this fact she told herself that she had known it long ago, that as surely as she was sitting there with her poor dizzy brain whirling from the sudden revulsion, so surely did she know with absolute certainty that they loved each other as only two such natures can love. "God help us both!" broke from Lorraine's pale lips. And then she drew the fur closer—a strange numbness seemed to deaden all sensation, the snow-flakes falling round her only increased her giddiness. She felt weak, stunned, and yet intensely alive. There was something for her to do, if she could only know what it was. Poor Lorraine! Love the Pilgrim had met her suddenly at the partings of the way, and had shown her His wounded side. There was no garland of red roses in his bruised hands, and something like a thorny crown encircled his pallid brow. Suffering and not roses, and the deep dark stain of martyred affections. The Divine Master that she had followed all her short, troubled life was demanding a further sacrifice.

The brown eyes grew strained and wistful as they followed Gavin's movements. How strong and capable he looked as he put his shoulder to the wheel. Bates was still at the mare's head, but Gavin unassisted had moved the phaeton off the stones. He was still breathing heavily from the effort as he crossed the road.

"It is all right now," he said, trying to speak cheerfully. "The phaeton is uninjured; only one wheel got caught on the stone heap. Do you feel a little better? Let me help you up, for there is no time to lose; the flakes are getting thicker."

"I am very foolish, very unreasonable," returned Lorraine nervously. Please forgive me, Colonel Trevor, but I cannot get into that phaeton again; the idea terrifies me."

"The mare is quite quiet," he urged. "She will go like a lamb now. It was only that ass braying that startled her. Do you think I would expose you to any danger? Will you not trust to me this once?"—with dangerous persuasiveness.

Lorraine's answer was to put her hand in his, and rise slowly from her seat, but as he stooped to assist her he saw her face. "You will do it to please me," he said humbly; "but it will frighten you to death! No, you shall walk, and I will send Bates on." And without waiting for Lorraine's answer, he threw the rug into the phaeton and told the man to drive on. "Mrs. Herbert is too nervous to get in again," he said coolly. "Handle the mare carefully, Bates; she is in rather a touchy mood." The man touched his hat and moved away.

"A pretty kettle of fish," muttered Bates, as he drove off. "Did ever any one hear the likes of that. I wonder what my lady up at Brae Farm would say to such goings on. It would take her down a peg or two, I warrant. 'I won't have you loafing about the place, George Bates, and making love to my maids,'—as houghty-toighty as you like. Well, here's a rum go; to think Davis should be laid up, and me taking his place, and for this to happen," and Bates grinned ominously, for those impassioned sentences had reached his ears.

"Now let us walk on as fast as possible," observed Gavin, as he put Lorraine's hand upon his arm—the touch of that light hand resting reluctantly on his coat-sleeve seemed to thrill through him. If only the walk would not hurt her, it would be bliss to him to be alone with her; and the white, whirling snow-flakes, shutting them into a new, strange world, gave him a sort of vertigo.

"Are you sure this will not hurt you?" he said suddenly; the caressing voice made Lorraine shiver, and tingle down to her finger-ends.

"Colonel Trevor,"—and then she stopped, and he could feel her hand tremble; "oh, do not speak to me in that voice," she burst out, "it hurts me somehow—it seems wrong—wrong to you and me, and,"—in a lower voice—"to Ellison;" then he knew that he had



betrayed himself. Good heavens! perhaps she had not lost consciousness; she must have heard his frantic words.

"What do you mean?" he stammered. "How have I had the misfortune to offend you? Lorraine, is it possible that you heard all I said?"

"Yes," she returned gently. "I wish you to know that—but you have not offended me; you were frightened; you thought I was hurt or dying, or you would never have spoken so"—and then a great sigh burst from her: how sweet, how passing sweet, death would have seemed to her at that moment.

"What can I say?" he returned hoarsely. "I cannot take back those words. Lorraine, you have my secret, but I never meant you to know. Forgive me, dearest, or I shall never know peace again."

"Hush, hush, for pity's sake!" she pleaded. "There is nothing to forgive, and you are safe with me. It is not your fault. Oh, I know that well; it is a great misfortune; a sad trouble that has come to both of us." Then a man's fierce joy of possession seized mightily on Gavin.

"You care for me, then?" he asked eagerly; "you love me, as I love you. Lorraine, my darling, let me hear that once from your lips."

"You are wrong to ask me that," she returned with grave tenderness; "it will make you no happier to know that I care. How could I help it when you were so good to me?—hush, let me speak; there is nothing you ought to say, nothing that I ought to hear. There has been too much said already, Colonel Trevor; you will always be a dear friend; I shall pray daily that this may pass, and that you may love Ellison as she deserves to be loved. You will be noble, will you not? You will keep your faith to her; you will try to make her happy; and I—I must go away for a little while until all this grows easier."

"Easier for you or for me do you mean?" holding her hands, and speaking with fierce insistence. It was growing dark, they could not see each other's faces; they two stood alone hand in hand, and heart to heart, in a film of white snow-flakes. Lorraine made no effort to withdraw her hands from that strong grasp, but her beautiful voice went out to him with a tremble in it:

"I am a weak woman, and I am very unhappy; as you are strong, be merciful and spare me!" A world of confession was in these words—they appealed to Gavin's higher nature.

"God bless and take care of you, and help me to do the right," he returned, in a low voice; and then very humbly, "Lorraine, it will be no disloyalty to Ellison—will you let me kiss you once before we part?"

For one moment there was silence, and he took it for consent and stooped over her; but very gently she put his face aside.

"Not now," she said, with a sweetness of tone that even at that



moment gave him exquisite pleasure. "I must not have that kiss; it would be robbing Ellison. Let me give you something instead," and before he could guess her intention, she had brought his hand to her lips.

"This is for the friend who was true to himself and me," she said gently, and then she took his arm again, as though she needed support, and they walked on to Brae Farm almost in silence.

## CHAPTER XLIII.

### POST-MARK, NEFYDD MADOC.

ALL their life long Lorraine and Gavin Trevor remembered that walk; but in after days they never spoke of it. That silence, so all pervading, so pregnant with intense meaning, the mysterious whiteness of the snow-flakes, that seemed to envelop them in a softly folding shroud, the icy coldness of the atmosphere, all lent a vagueness, a dim, nebulous obscurity to the hour at once undefinable and uncommunicable; and yet, strange paradox of lovers, no speech could have been so lucid and explicit as that long silence.

A trifling action on Gavin's part showed that nothing escaped his notice. Lorraine had just discovered that the hand resting on his arm was growing numb with the cold, when she suddenly felt a warm, enveloping pressure. Gavin had placed his right hand over hers, and Lorraine understanding the kindly motive made no resistance.

At the little green gate they paused by mutual consent, but Gavin showed no intention of entering.

"Will you tell Ellison that I cannot come in this evening, but that I will see her to-morrow?" he said hurriedly; and then as Lorraine bowed her head, and mutely extended her hand, he detained it.

"Wait a moment; I want to ask you a question. You will not go away yet."

"I do not know. I cannot settle things in a moment," she returned quickly. Why had he asked her this? Did he not know that she would only feel safe when she was a hundred miles away? After the revelation this evening no human power would have kept her in Highlands. Already she had vowed to herself that she would never return until Ellison had become Gavin's wife. The question seemed futile to her; it was unnecessary, it was cruel of him to ask it. But Gavin had no selfish purport in his inquiry; he was thinking solely of her comfort; it would lie heavily on his conscience if through his recklessness she were driven away from home in this inclement weather.

But he little knew the strength and tenacity that lay under Lorraine's softness.

"Promise me one thing," he urged, as his grasp tightened insensibly, "that you will go to no place where you cannot expect reasonable and sufficient comfort. You have had hardships enough already. I will not endure any repetition of your former life."

Lorraine shuddered. Did he really fear that she would go back to Beaumont Street, to those hideous streets where the children played all day long in the gutter, where the shrill voices of women seemed to sound in her ears day and night? Beaumont Street without Tedo—never—never!

"I think I can promise you that," she returned. "Will you let me go now, Colonel Trevor?"

"You shall go in a moment; but there is one more word to say. Do nothing in a hurry; you are safe from me; you can trust me to keep out of your way as long as you remain at Highlands. I respect you too highly; I love you far too well to harass you with my presence. After to-night I shall make no attempt to speak to you, or to interfere with your future. Do you believe this?"

"I believe you implicitly."

"And you will do nothing rashly. You will be kind to me, and take care of yourself. Lorraine—Lorraine, for God's sake promise me this!"

"I will take care of myself. Good-night, Colonel Trevor, and thank you for all your goodness;" and then she turned resolutely away. What was the use of prolonging such painful moments? Could anything lessen her misery? She loved this man, and she knew it; and the knowledge could give neither of them happiness.

The moment Lorraine rang the bell Ellison came to the door. Her fair face looked flushed and anxious.

"Oh, Lorraine, dear," she exclaimed, "how late you are! I have been so fidgety about you the last hour. I was so afraid you had missed your way." And then as the light showed her Lorraine's pallid face and dishevelled appearance, she uttered a shocked exclamation: "What has happened? Why do you look like this?"

"Let me come in and I will tell you," returned Lorraine a little breathlessly. Ellison's scrutiny made her nervous. She turned away hastily, and entered the sitting-room. It looked just as she had imagined it; a great log was spluttering and hissing and diffusing tiny blue flames, the curtains were drawn, the lamps lighted, tea was on the round table. Tweed sniffed approvingly at the pile of muffins frizzling comfortably on the little brass tripod, and then lay down stiffly on the rug before the fire. Lorraine sank into the big easy-chair, and drew off her old gloves hurriedly; she had folded them away and thrust them into her pocket before Ellison had finished

stirring the fire; she would never wear them again, they should be sacred to her—relics to be hoarded and treasured.

Ellison did not at once repeat the question; she unfastened her cousin's fur cloak, and unpinned her hat. As she did so she noticed the battered and torn brim; then she gently smoothed the dishevelled hair, and brought her a cup of hot tea. "Drink this, and then you shall tell me; you are too numbed with cold to talk just now. I shall ring for Dorcas to bring your slippers. I hope she has a good fire burning in your room."

Lorraine tried to answer, but something impeded her speech, and the tears rushed to her eyes: she was worn out with emotion, and Ellison's sisterly care filled her with passionate gratitude. Ellison saw two long drops rolling slowly down her cheeks, but she took no notice. "Could I hurt a hair of her head?" Lorraine was saying to herself a little wildly. "I would rather die—I would die ten times over to spare her trouble."

But presently, when the choking sensation had passed, she began to speak of her own account.

"You were right, Ellison, I ought not to have been so reckless; but I have had my punishment. Oh, how cold it was, and then it began to snow, and my breathing got oppressed, and I could not walk fast; that Bramfield road is so long too. I was standing still for a moment to recover my breath when Colonel Trevor drove up in his phaeton." Here Ellison uttered a low exclamation, but Lorraine went on hurriedly: "He was driving Madge Wildfire, and Bates, not Davis, was with him. He seemed rather vexed to see me such a distance from home; and as the snow was beginning to fall fast, he insisted on my getting into the phaeton."

"Of course he did," in a matter-of-fact tone. "Gavin is not the man to drive on when any one is in difficulty. I daresay he gave you a good lecture on your rash behaviour."

"Yes," returned Lorraine, and her head drooped. "He was rather put out, and I daresay he thought me very foolish; but the worst was to come. Just at the corner near Brook's Farm a donkey brayed, and Madge was frightened. She plunged dreadfully, and then backed against a stone heap, and we were all thrown out. Colonel Trevor was landed in a ditch, but it was full of dead leaves, and he was not a bit hurt. I think I must have been stunned for a moment, and of course I am badly bruised; and—and—I could not get into the phaeton again—so we walked home."

"Why did not Gavin come in and tell me all this himself?" observed Ellison abruptly. She had turned pale at Lorraine's narration, and there was an uneasy look in her eyes. "You are keeping nothing back from me, Lorraine? You are sure Gavin is not hurt? It is so strange"—knitting her brows; "it is not like his usual thoughtfulness. He might have known it would have made me happier to have seen him for a minute."

"He was cold and tired, and he wanted to see after the mare," returned Lorraine, speaking with nervous haste. "He is not hurt at all—as I told you, the ditch was full of dead leaves; but he has torn his coat"—some inspiration induced Lorraine to say that. "And he was dreadfully splashed, for the ditch was not quite dry. He told me to say that he would see you to-morrow; and then Ellison's brow cleared, and she turned her attention to Lorraine.

"I shall tell Dorcas to warm your bed, and take up some warm water; you must go to bed at once, you do not look fit to be up; let me give you some more tea." Lorraine did not refuse the tea, but she could eat nothing; she was badly bruised—as she had told Ellison—and her head was beginning to ache. When she had finished her tea she went upstairs, and Ellison followed her. Lorraine would willingly have dispensed with her help, but she dared not say so; reluctance would only have excited Ellison's suspicion. The fire burned brightly. Lorraine could not refrain from a sigh of satisfaction as she laid her head on the lavender-scented pillows. Ellison looked at her pale face anxiously; Lorraine was certainly much thinner, she thought, as she went downstairs to write a note to Gavin.

How thankful Lorraine was when the door closed on her cousin, and she could lie there staring at the fire, and thinking out the problem of the future. "There is only one right and one wrong," she said wearily to herself. The right thing is for me to go away, and then he will come back to her and do his duty, and find peace. And then the urgent prayer went up from her troubled heart, "Help me to right the wrong; to do what is just and noble, and not to think of myself;" and then again, "It is not his fault, neither he nor I are to blame; but from to-day the responsibility of her happiness will rest on us both. God do so to me, and more also, if I cause her a pang of sorrow that could be avoided; rather than that I would shake off the dust of this dear place and never see my boy's grave again." And strong in her pure rectitude and sense of right, Lorraine meant every word she said; there was no specious reserve in her prayer, no cowardly wish for delay, for procrastination. From this day, from the hour of Gavin's self-betrayal, the responsibility of Ellison's peace would rest heavily upon them.

Before she sank into an exhausted sleep Lorraine had made her plans; and though the next day she was unable to rise from her bed, and Dr. Howell had prescribed perfect rest for her, Dorcas had posted a letter in Lorraine's handwriting when she went down to the village, and it was directed to "Miss Bretherton, Black Nest, Nefydd Madoc."

The letter was as follows:—

"DEAR MISS BRETHERTON,—Do you remember what you said to me that afternoon when I bade you good-bye? We had been to the

White Cottage together, and we were standing at the sitting-room window of the *Waggon and Horses* looking down the Bracken Path. 'If you ever want a friend or are in any trouble, just write to me, and I will do what I can for you; will you promise me this?' Those were your very words; and my answer was, 'Certainly I will;' and now I am going to keep my word. I am in great trouble—my child is dead—and my heart seems about breaking; but that is not all, there are reasons why I want to leave Highlands for a little. I cannot explain, I shall never be able to explain; but I must have change immediately. Once you asked me to visit you; if you renew that invitation I shall not refuse. You see that I am a woman of my word, and that I believe in you.—Yours very sincerely,

"LORRAINE HERBERT."

"Put the letter in the post yourself, Dorcas," Lorraine had said; and Dorcas had done her errand so discreetly that no one guessed it. The reply came by return of post; Lorraine was still in bed; and her bruises still ached.

"DEAR MRS. HERBERT" (it began)—"If I had not guessed you were a woman of your word, I would not have troubled my head about you. The world is so full of fools and idiots that it is a comfort to meet with a sensible person. It is a blessing some one believes in me. I have not made many friends during my pilgrimage of sixty-five odd years—sixty-five I was last birthday—but that stupid old Pritchard is always telling me 'a woman is only as old as she looks,' so we may as well deduct fifteen years. So your boy is dead. My dear soul, he is in the safest place, if you will only believe it. I saw in a moment that he had no constitution; you would never have been free from anxiety about him. Which of the ministering spirits—croup or convulsions—carried him off? Ah! they have rough disguises, these good angels, but they mean well, or else so many children would not die. There is a small boy down here at the Lodge—little Llewelin—who died this morning, and his mother, Rebecca, is fretting herself nearly sick about him. He was a red-headed, impudent little Celt; but you would never get Rebecca to believe that. I have been talking to her for an hour, and feeding her with good sweet broth; but her idiot of a husband only cries over her and makes her worse. And they have five other torments alive and well—but then how is a cross-grained old maid to know how a mother feels under such circumstances? So you mean to pay Black Nest a visit? Well, come then, and Pritchard and I will make you as comfortable as we can. If you are not afraid of snow-capped mountains and clear dry cold, we can promise you snug quarters, and fires that would roast an ox.

"Just telegraph the day and hour of your arrival. There is a capital fast train that leaves Euston at 10.55. You must sleep in the hotel, and take that; the carriage shall meet you at Aves-ford, and bring

you to Nefydd Madoc. It will be a three miles' drive in the dark ; but David Fechan knows the road well, and so do Moll and Brown Ben.

"Your room will be ready the day after to-morrow. Betty and Beckie are busy at it already, so don't keep it waiting.—I remain, my dear Mrs. Herbert, always your sincerely,

"MARION BRETHERTON."

Lorraine replaced the letter in the envelope, but she said nothing about it when Ellison came up to wish her good-morning. Muriel found her unusually silent when she paid her daily visit.

And when at last Muriel left her, she lay with closed eyes, absorbed in the saddest reflections. Later in the afternoon, when Ellison entered, she thought she was asleep, and would have stolen gently away, only Lorraine grasped her dress. "Why are you going away? I am not asleep, Ellison ; sit down here"—pointing to her bed—"I have been wanting to talk to you all day." Then, as Ellison seated herself with an unsuspecting smile, Lorraine propped herself up on the pillows, and, with hesitating speech and downcast eyes, told her of Miss Bretherton's invitation.

#### CHAPTER XLIV.

"DID YOU TELL HIM?"

THE following evening Ellison was standing by the fire listening to Gavin as he scraped the snow off his boots in the porch. The snow lay deep round Brae Farm, and he had ploughed his way with difficulty across the Brae meadow. The Woodlands looked like a fairy forest in the pale moonlight, and the red glow of Lorraine's fire shone in his eyes as he plodded down the lawn.

There would be no danger of meeting her this evening, the firelight told him that ; he would be spared the deep embarrassment of looking at her and speaking to her. He was grateful for this ; but his anxiety about her had forced him to stop Dr. Howell that very morning to inquire after her.

It struck him that Dr. Howell spoke in a guarded way. "Mrs. Herbert was suffering from nervous exhaustion ; it was a breakdown of the nerves : the shock had only hastened matters ; it was due to allied causes, and was of long standing. She had fretted too much about her boy ; she was extremely sensitive ; she wanted a change. It would be good for her to go away. He had told Miss Lee so. Those visits to the churchyard were only feeding the mischief ; he had been obliged to interdict them. She needed firmness and bracing ; she had given way long enough." Gavin pondered heavily over the doctor's curt sentences. Dr. Howell was extremely interested in his patient ; he had taken a great deal of notice of her since Tedo's



death, and had spoken to his wife more than once of Mrs. Herbert's pluckiness. It was no light cause that made him veer round now, and talk of firmness and bracing.

Ellison did not go out into the porch as usual to greet Gavin. She stood quite still with one hand resting on the mantelpiece while he threw off his ulster; but as he stooped to kiss her he saw she was not looking as calm as usual. He was very quick at noticing any change of expression, and as he held her hand he asked at once what was troubling her.

"Out with it, Ellison," he said, trying to speak cheerily. "You have a bothered look, and confession is good for the soul."

"I know it is," she returned, smiling at him, for his presence and the touch of his hand soothed her. "I have been wanting you all day, Gavin. Are you not a little later than usual? Sit down in this comfortable chair beside me while I talk to you. Oh, what a comfort it is to have some one to whom one can grumble!"

"If you think that such a privilege I am at your service to-day and every day. I like you in that black velvet, Ellison; it makes you look more queenly than ever. What a stately woman you are growing?"

"Am I? I am glad you like my new gown; but it is not velvet, you foolish fellow, it is only velveteen." But she made a mental note that Gavin liked velveteen. She must have a real velvet in her trousseau—should it be green or dark heliotrope? either would suit her. These little feminine vanities occupied her for a moment. It was no light matter to Ellison that Gavin's taste should be pleased. Even in trifles she would be a model wife.

"Well, dear, how long are you going to keep me waiting?" he said at last as he rested his arm comfortably on the cushions of her easy-chair! Her hand with the emerald and diamond gipsy ring was already in his. "What is the grievance, Ellison?"

"It is about Lorraine," she returned; and then his face grew grave, and he drew back a little. "What do you think, Gavin, she wants to go away for a long change? That odd Miss Bretherton has been writing to her, and has invited her to Nefydd Madoc. Fancy going to Nefydd Madoc this weather; but Lorraine is bent on it. I never knew her so obstinate before, and, what is worse, Dr. Howell sides with her."

"You have talked to him, then?"

"Yes, I captured him on his way from Lorraine's room, and had it out with him this morning; but I did no good at all. I told him that Lorraine was as weak as a baby; that she had not strength to dress herself; and that she was perfectly unfit for that long cold journey; and though he seemed to agree with me he actually said it was the least of two evils. Mrs. Herbert's nervous system was seriously deranged—she had lost tone and flesh. Highlands was not the place for her just now; she would never regain strength



until she had had change of scene. Wales was not the best place, of course, at this season of the year; but the dry cold of Nefydd Madoc would not hurt her; and it would be good for her to be with strangers. He was so positive that I had not a word to say."

"I think you may be satisfied with his advice; Howell is a sensible man."

"I let him go at last. One cannot argue with him; he is as obstinate as a certain gentleman I know. A word of opposition makes him put his foot down at once."

"When I went upstairs I found Lorraine crying pitifully. She wanted to go; she felt she must go; but she was so afraid that I should think her unkind. I had quite a piece of work with her, poor dear! She got almost hysterical at last. I could only quiet her by telling her that I thought that she was quite right to go; that Dr. Howell had prescribed change of scene for her; and that it was not the least necessary to cry one's eyes out when one was going to pay a pleasant visit. Is it not sad, Gavin? I shall feel so dull without Lorraine. I have grown so fond of her during these few months. It has been nice to have her to talk to at all hours. She is so gentle and unselfish that one never finds her in the way."

"Of course you will miss her."

"How coldly you speak, Gavin. You are not a bit sympathetic this evening. I do wish you liked poor dear Lorraine better. I must say I wonder at your bad taste," and Ellison's tone was decidedly aggrieved.

Gavin started and drew his hand away.

"Good heavens, Ellison, what can you mean! I have always liked Mrs. Herbert."

"You were very good to her in her trouble; I know that, dearest; but you never seem to care to talk to her, and yet she is very intelligent and well read. It is very important to me that you should like Lorraine. By-and-by, when we are married"—and here Ellison blushed like a young girl—"you will see so much of her, for of course we shall always be together. I have thought of such a nice plan," she continued, turning her long neck to look round at him. "Why are you prowling about the room, Gavin, in that polar-bear fashion? Conversation is so much more comfortable when people sit down." And at this very plain rebuke Gavin seated him on the broad, cushioned arm of her chair, and as she leant against him he kissed the coil of brown hair that rested against his shoulders.

"What is the plan?" he asked, presently.

"You are certainly not in a talking mood this evening," she returned, laughing. "I am sure ten minutes have elapsed since my last speech. I was only thinking how nice it would be if Lorraine were to live on here, and Muriel were to keep her company; they are such friends, and suit each other so admirably, and we could see them every day. What does your masculine wisdom say to that?"

"My masculine wisdom would prefer to think it over. It is not a bad plan"—hastily, as she looked a little disappointed; "but would not Muriel prefer the Dower House—Ferndale, I mean—when Mrs. Langton leaves it? Mrs. Herbert could join her there." Gavin had already made up his mind that Muriel must go to the Dower House. Ellison would like her house to herself; and he thought Mrs. Herbert would easily be persuaded to bear Muriel company. To live at Brae Farm—no—that would not be possible either for himself or for her.

"Ferndale!" responded Ellison in an astonished tone of voice. "Dear Gavin, why should you wish to banish poor Muriel to that distance when Brae Farm will be standing empty?"

"Sam Brattle could live there," he returned quickly; "and this room and a couple of bedrooms might be kept for London friends. Muriel always liked the idea of Ferndale; she and the mother were going there, you know. The walk is nothing; you could still meet every day if you wished."

"Perhaps so, except in bad weather, and then those dripping woodlands would be hardly pleasant. You must think it over, Gavin, as you smoke your pipe this evening. I maintain that my plan is far better than yours. Brae Farm will be your property, of course, but Lorraine will be a splendid manager. I have taught her lots of things. She is already very clever with the poultry, and Mrs. Drake will manage the new dairymaid. It is such a bore that Ruth and Eunice have decided to be married on the same day."

"What a hard-hearted speech, you naughty woman! Sam Brattle was only talking about it yesterday. He took me all over the house. It is in splendid order. Eunice has feathered her nest nicely by taking Sam. He is a warm man, as they call it; and Brattle's is a safe concern. Eunice will be better off than your handsome Ruth; but Sam is getting things ship-shape at the cottage. By-the-bye, Ellison," rather gravely, "did we settle the day? I know June is our month; we told dear mother so."

"There is no need to settle the day yet," returned Ellison with a sudden thrill in her voice; "it is only January now. Lorraine will be away some weeks, but she will come back in time to help me. I think of going to the Mervyns in March to do my shopping and get my presents for Eunice and Ruth. I am going to give them their wedding dresses and some nice table linen. Pale grey silk, rather a pearly soft grey, is to be the colour. How handsome Ruth will look in it."

"But they are not to be married before their mistress?" persisted Gavin.

"No, a fortnight later. Lorraine and I have planned that already. Surely you are not going, Gavin?" as he rose; but he returned a little hurriedly that he had letters to write.

## CHAPTER XLV.

"IT IS FOR YOU TO DECIDE."

IN spite of Lorraine's ardent desire to leave a place so fraught with peril to her, it was some time before she could carry out her resolution. She remained in her room another ten days; and even when she was strong enough to come down to Ellison's sitting-room for a few hours each day, she always made an excuse to retire before Colonel Trevor paid his evening visit. Ellison never persuaded her to remain; she had got it into her head that Gavin and Lorraine failed to understand each other, and that it would be wiser to keep them apart. Gavin's manner always became cold and constrained when she mentioned her cousin, while Lorraine hardly mentioned him at all. More than once Ellison had spoken of her scheme, but Gavin had not been responsive; once when she had pressed him he had answered rather curtly, that he had not changed his opinion; he was sorry to differ from her, but he still thought the Dower House would be best for Muriel, unless she would prefer remaining at Brae; and then he added with forced composure, "In my opinion it would be wiser for Mrs. Herbert to be away from the Farm. I know she has a morbid dislike to passing the pond; the Dower House is very retired, and the rooms are snug and comfortable: it would be a most suitable residence for two ladies."

Ellison felt vexed and disappointed, more so, indeed, than she ventured to own; it was the first time that their wills had clashed, and the young mistress of Brae had to fight a hard battle with herself before she would answer pleasantly. Gavin was quite aware how he had hurt her; her flushed cheek and the impatient sparkle in her blue eyes warned him that he was putting her to a severe test, but his own peace of mind and Lorraine's also were at stake. His sense of right compelled him to be firm; he would never yield to her in this—never. Muriel should go to the Dower House or remain at Brae.

"Very well, it is for you to decide," she answered a little coldly. Though she loved him so dearly, she blamed him in her heart for this perversity. Gavin had no right to maintain his opinions so stiffly. Brae Farm was her property; it would have been better taste to have given way to her in this.

Ellison was too proud to stoop to any entreaties; she had stated her wishes, and Gavin was simply disregarding them. He and Muriel might settle their own plans now, and she would not interfere, but all the same she was determined that she would take no steps about the Brattles. Sam should put the cottage in order for his bride, and Gavin should settle things later.

"It is for you to decide," was all that she could bring herself to say.

"Thank you, dear. I think you may trust me to do what is best," he returned gratefully, but he made no further attempt to bring her round to his opinion. That evening he spoke to Muriel, and she was astonished and disappointed to hear him say that he could not sanction her going to the Farm.

"I have other plans," he said evasively. "When we are married, Ellison and I will talk them over more fully. I think it would be best for Sam Brattle to live at the Farm, but we should retain the best rooms for our friends. The Dower House is in capital order, and the furniture perfectly good; if Mrs. Herbert will consent to live with you, I should think you would be very comfortable. You shall have the pony-carriage, and the brougham, and bay mare for your exclusive use, and I shall make over Davis to you—he is a steady capable fellow; and he and his wife can occupy the rooms over the coach-house."

"Oh, Gavin, how good of you to have thought of all that," she returned with tears in her eyes. In her heart Muriel was excessively disappointed, though she would not have told her brother so for worlds; she was not fond of the Dower House, it was very old-fashioned, the rooms were low, and the windows small, and it was shut in and had no special view. The Farm was delightful! and only the day before she and Ellison had planned that she should have Ellison's room "Peace," for no power on earth would have induced Lorraine to give up "Good-rest" and the "Dovecote."

She must resign Nora's lessons, the child could not walk all that distance; and of course she could not expect to see half so much of Ellison. She would have to drive to church and to the village, for the walk was beyond her strength. The Dower House was a good half mile from the Woodlands, and lay on the Darley road; her nearest neighbours would be the Mordaunts. Homestead was only a quarter of a mile farther, but she had no special interest in the Mordaunts.

In spite of her disappointment, Gavin had no difficulty with Muriel, she was perfectly submissive and grateful. She allowed him to fix the number of her servants, two maids and a handy man for the garden. Muriel must have a cow, and a good poultry-yard, it must be stocked from the Farm. Mrs. Herbert was very clever with poultry, and the man could milk the cow. Dorcas might come to them if Ellison approved, but Mrs. Drake would still live at the Farm. Muriel got enthusiastic at last as Gavin planned it all. The brother and sister sat up quite late that night. She forgot all about the small-paned windows and the rhododendron bed that shut out the view. If only Mrs. Herbert would consent to live with her, she thought she could be very happy at the Dower House.

Muriel felt almost cheerful for the first time since her mother's death. Gavin had kissed her affectionately and thanked her warmly for falling in with his views. He remembered the cloud on Ellison's

brow, and the chilly tone in which she had signified her acquiescence, with something like displeasure—but neither of them imagined what a miserable evening Ellison was spending.

It was "the little rift within the lover's lute," that marred the sweet harmony, the first chill breath of autumn that spoilt the downy peach-bloom of her full content. Gavin had been inconsiderate, almost unkind, and she was grievously hurt. For Lorraine, lying on her couch upstairs, little thought what an apple of discord she had become.

A strong, self-reliant nature like Ellison's is also strong to suffer. For the first time since her engagement she slept restlessly and rose unrefreshed. The conflict between her will and her affection had been long and obstinate, but affection had gained the mastery.

When Gavin saw her next, she met him with a sweet smile, and there was no trace of wounded feeling in her manner. As he kissed her, she whispered, "Forgive me, dearest. I ought not to have wanted my own way so badly. If I cannot agree, I can at least hide my disagreement. You thought so yesterday, did you not?"

"Never mind what I thought yesterday," he said, as he put his arm round her tenderly. "I think you now one of the sweetest of women." Not the sweetest. Even at the moment of their reconciliation he could not tell her that; for in word he was ever truthful, and then sitting down beside her he repeated the substance of his conversation with Muriel.

Ellison listened with downcast eyes, but she offered no objections; only a pang crossed her as she saw how determined he was. Well, she must be content not to understand Gavin, for she failed utterly to comprehend him. "Muriel had better have Daisy, the brown and white Alderney, she gives the best milk," she said, in a quiet matter-of-fact tone; "and, of course, she must have the black Spanish poultry, and the little speckled hen, and the bantams too, Lorraine is so fond of them; and it is a good idea of yours, Gavin, that Dorcas should go to them; we must try and get Mrs. Earnshaw's Jenny to be their cook, she is an excellent kitchen-maid, and cooks quite well."

"Thanks, dear, that will be very nice."

"But, Gavin, do you not think that Lorraine ought to be consulted without delay?" Then Gavin shook his head.

"If you ask me, I should suggest that nothing should be said to her at present; let her go to Nefydd Madoc and get strong; you and Muriel could write to her there. Believe me," as Ellison looked decidedly dubious at this, "she is not in the state to like anything. I judge of this from what you tell me; she is too weak to grasp things properly, and she might take a dislike to the whole scheme, and then Muriel would be disappointed."

"If you think so, of course we had better leave it," returned Ellison slowly; she thought Gavin reasonable in this. In the end nothing was said to Lorraine; and Muriel was obliged to see her

depart, without knowing whether she would consent to share her home. The uncertainty tried both her and Ellison, but Gavin had proved himself their master, and his directions were fully carried out.

The day for Lorraine's departure was at last fixed for January 30th, nearly a month after Madge Wildfire's escapade. Madge was still in the Brae stables, and Gavin still occasionally drove her. But it was understood between him and Ellison that Bates should have notice to quit. The man's manner had been rather insolent on one occasion when Colonel Trevor had found fault with him. Gavin told Ellison that he was sure he had been drinking, "He is a clever groom, but he is shifty and quarrelsome," he said; "in short, he is an awkward customer, and I shall be glad to get rid of him; but I shall keep him a few weeks longer for my own convenience."

Ellison privately thought this a mistake; Gavin had done wrong in taking him at all, and it was a still greater mistake to keep him on after his insolent behaviour; he was a perfect plague to Dorcas, and the girl seemed afraid to stir out for fear of meeting him, he was an ill-conditioned, surly fellow, and his fellow-servants were getting sick of him; but since that little disagreement with Gavin, Ellison was rather chary of giving her opinion, perhaps she recognised the futility of any argument, when Gavin had once made up his mind. Somehow since their engagement, her influence had not seemed so great with him. Gavin was altered in some way, he was not so ready to defer to her judgment, he settled things for himself in a masterful, off-hand way, and it was no longer a necessity with him to tell her every little detail of his daily life. Yes, in spite of her happiness, Ellison missed some sweet ingredient in their long twilight talks; now and then she questioned herself; what could it be—what was the difference? Did she really understand Gavin as well as she thought she did? Could any woman really understand such a complex being as man? "Half angel, half devil, and wholly child," as an old Swiss professor once described him.

Ellison, with her usual thoughtfulness, had made all possible arrangements for Lorraine's comfort; she and Dorcas had done all her packing, and she had ordered rooms at the Euston Hotel; they were to go up to London early in the afternoon, that Lorraine might have a long rest; and she intended to give her in charge to the guard; he would go as far as Chester. Lorraine must have her luncheon-basket and her tea; she put aside her own fur-lined rug for Lorraine's use. Lorraine might well look on with dumb gratitude as she watched the strong capable hands fulfil their work. It was always a pleasure to watch Ellison do anything, there was such firm decision in her movements; busy as she might be, she was never hurried. "Every moment has its own work," she would say. "There is no good crowding things in; hurry is a proof of an undisciplined mind."

Lorraine had no intention of seeing Colonel Trevor before she left;



they had mutually decided to avoid each other, but on the afternoon before she left visitors had called. Mrs. Earnshaw and her son Dacre, who had just returned from Canada, had detained Lorraine downstairs beyond her usual hour. They had just gone, and she was resting for a few minutes in her chair, looking very white and weak, when Ellison entered the room, followed by Colonel Trevor.

Lorraine flushed crimson, but a screen between her and the firelight prevented Ellison from noticing her extreme nervousness. Gavin's face was rather rigid as he shook hands with her, and asked after her health.

"If Madge Wildfire is to blame for this, I shall certainly send her away," he said abruptly; and Ellison again felt herself a little hurt. How she had begged him to get rid of Madge, and he had only laughed at her; but of course it was natural that Lorraine's delicacy should shock him; and after all, no doubt the accident had caused most of the mischief. Ellison calmed down when she remembered that Lorraine had been ill a month, and that this was the first time Gavin had seen her.

To tell the truth, Gavin was so disturbed by Lorraine's fragile appearance that he could hardly bring himself to talk at all. She was terribly wasted, and the hand he had taken felt thin and hot. If he could only be alone with her for five minutes, if he could only question her; and, as though in answer to his unspoken wish, Ellison suddenly announced that old Mrs. Pierce was waiting to speak to her.

"You will entertain Gavin until I come back, will you not?" she observed cheerfully as she left the room, and Lorraine, who had risen from her chair, sat down again reluctantly. She thought it was cruel that she should be subjected to this.

Gavin hardly waited for the door to close; he crossed the room with nervous abruptness, and stood on the rug near her; his anxiety was too overwhelming to allow him to see how he was embarrassing her.

"Tell me," he said quickly, almost peremptorily, "is Madge Wildfire really to blame for your illness? I am shocked to see the change in you; if Madge is really the cause, I will have her shot at once."

"Please do not say such things," returned Lorraine in a trembling voice; "how could poor Madge help being startled by that horrible bray? It quite frightened me for the moment; indeed—indeed it was not only that—Dr. Howell said so. I have not been well since—since that dreadful day," and then she stopped, unable to say more for the sob in her throat; but he understood her; her strength and spirit had failed from the hour he had laid her dead child in her arms.

"Yes, yes, I know," his voice growing dangerously tender, "you need not tell me; it will be good for you to be away from here, but



you must not stay away too long ; if Nefydd Madoc is too cold, if it does not suit you, you must let us find you some other place."

"It will suit me as well as any other place," she returned.

The weary tone of indifference with which she spoke brought a mist before his eyes. He could not bear to hear her speak so, and yet, what could he say? "Lorraine—Lorraine," he whispered huskily, "do not speak so ; you are young and so patient and good that life must have some sweetness in reserve for you."

Her lip quivered, but she had no answer ready.

"Do not make things too difficult for me," he went on. "If you have any regard for my peace of mind, you will take care of yourself ; it is the one thing you can do for me."

Then for the first time she looked at him, and her beautiful brown eyes were full of tears.

"I will do the best I can, indeed I will. I will promise you that. Do you think," her voice thrilling a little, "that I will not do my part when you are doing yours so nobly?" and then she rose from her chair and held out her hand to him. "Good-bye, Colonel Trevor, please forgive me, but I cannot stay ; I am not strong yet, and——" Then he lifted her hand reverently to his lips, and as she turned away, she heard him say "God bless you."

When Ellison returned to the room a few minutes later she was surprised to see that Lorraine's seat was empty. Gavin was warming his hands at the fire, and his back was towards her.

"Was Lorraine tired? I had no idea you were alone," she said, coming to his side.

"Yes, she was tired, and I thought it kinder to let her go." Gavin spoke a little moodily. "She looks terribly ill, Ellison ; worse than I imagined. Dr. Howell was perfectly right when he said she needed a long change," and then with curious abruptness he changed the subject. "Muriel asked me to bring you some patterns for the new curtains," he said hurriedly. "They are in my ulster pocket, I believe," but he was rather a long time finding them, and during the rest of his visit he was strangely absent, more so than usual, Ellison thought, as she looked at him wistfully ; did he not remember that she was going away for two nights, and yet he had taken leave of her without mentioning the fact ; he had not even offered to drive them to the station. Ellison felt a little dull as she went back to the fireplace. How many solitary evenings she would spend there while Lorraine was regaining strength at Nefydd Madoc.

*(To be continued.)*

## THE MATABELE REBELLION.

BY AN EYE-WITNESS.

THE following extract from a letter from one of the principal actors in the scenes described must prove of interest to all readers, and especially to those who have friends or relatives in South Africa.

Every one during that time of suspense must have felt intense anxiety for news concerning his fellow-countrymen exposed to danger and death. From day to day none could tell what the next might bring forth in the shape of ruin and massacre. Even now that the rebellion is said to be over, we have no guarantee that another and, it might well be, more desperate rebellion will not one day break out.

Nothing but the subjugation of these savages will ever place peace and safety on a firm footing. This has not been done. They have not yet learned their lesson and received their punishment, and so it is to be hoped that fore-warned may prove fore-armed, and we may be better prepared to meet any emergency in the future than we have been in the past. But for the bravery and tact of a few men, such as the writer of the following lines, amongst the foremost and most active of those in command, one dare not think of the sorrow and mourning that might have entered many an English home. The horrors were bad enough; but they might have proved another chapter in history to place beside that of the Indian Mutiny.

Let us also hope that we shall henceforth maintain our rights to the utmost in South Africa, in spite of—nay, because of—the late unfortunate raid; in spite of President Kruger's clever diplomacy, supported by German influence and intrigue; in spite of the unfriendliness of a certain section of the Boers, who have received everything they possess from English energy, enterprise and generosity. And yet further let us hope that every possible power and recognition will be given to Cecil Rhodes, to whom alone we owe all our advantages on South African territory: privileges and possessions that have been trembling in the balance, and it may be, through the inactive policy that seems to have crept into our political ranks, are still in jeopardy.

But to the letter, which speaks for itself and needs no editorial comment:—

BULUWAYO, July 7, 1896.

I have just returned to Buluwayo, having been away three months and one week. I have your two letters, and must hasten to reply, as doubtless you are wondering how we here are faring.

First, I am very well; in fact, never was better in my life; though I

have slept under the stars for the above period ; but with the exception of the first ten days we had no rain. The first ten days were wretched, and I suffered considerably.

You now, of course, want me to begin at the beginning and tell you all about the war. Mind, what I say is purely my own opinion. First, then, as to the cause of the Matabele outbreak. The real reason is impossible to get at ; it may have been caused by any of the following.

We had here a force of native Matabele police all armed and drilled. These men used to go out among the various kraals to get labour for the mines and various works going on. They were sent in twos and threes all over the country to bring in boys. The wages of these boys were ten shillings a week and food. This native police force was partly the cause of the disturbance, for instead of persuading boys to come to work they persuaded them not to do so, and smuggled all arms and ammunition they could get hold of out to them. When the time was ripe for revolt, all, with the exception of about eighty, of these native police ran away and joined their own friends against us.

The Matabele have never worked, but are always roving round killing. They are a fighting nation, and will not work. The women do what has to be done ; but in past years, for food (cattle and grain) they depended on the Makalakas, Maholis and Mashonas (all of whom live in Matabeleland), whom they raided ; and if they did not part quietly they just wiped them out. These three tribes were, in fact, their slaves ; now they have not only killed white people, but many and any of these tribes who will not assist them.

The Matabele are very powerful and numerous. Up to date they must have lost about 2000 ; but 10,000 would not affect them. The only thing that has been in our favour is that they have no head since Lobengula was killed. They are split up in impis, or regiments, each under a chief who fancies himself as good as any other. Of these there are four very powerful chiefs who can compel the smaller ones to side with them, and have done so. To go back to the cause. What helped their cause was the loss we sustained of Jameson and all his men. This was known to the Matabele through the native police all over the country as soon as we knew it. They reported that the Great White Chief and all his big guns (Maxims) had been taken by the Boers. This in their eyes was an act of providence in their favour. Then came the rinderpest, when the government ordered all diseased cattle to be killed. This they could not understand, because, remember, they eat rinderpest meat and thrive on it.

But to come to the chief point and my personal opinion : it was simply the witch-doctors or agents of the M'Limo.

The M'Limo is their God : an unknown and unseen spirit, all-powerful, whom the witch-doctors say they are bound to obey, and whose

agents they are. The witch-doctors are supposed to be in communication with the M'Limo, and they are the only men who are authorised to carry out the M'Limo's instructions (it is needless to say they get very fat on it). They, and they only, have caused all the bloodshed. They told the Matabele to rise one and all at the new moon in March last, to kill all the white people, to gather all the crops they could on their route, and to take all the cattle, etc., they could collect. They said the M'Limo would destroy Buluwayo with a thunderbolt, and that the white people's bullets would be turned into water. They were on no account to take any goods from stores, but only to burn them out and kill all. The Matabele did take goods, and this was the reason given for disobedience, that Buluwayo was not destroyed. These brutes of witch-doctors are cunning in the extreme. They do not allow themselves to be spoken with as ordinary Kaffirs, but live in the hills, in various parts, in caves. The Matabele almost worship them. Everything they require is brought them. There is one head, and he sends his instructions to the others, who in turn convey the same to the heads of regiments. I am pleased to say one was shot a week ago by two American scouts, who, with the aid of a friendly native, penetrated into the Matopo Hills and shot him in his cave. Even the M'Limo did not look after his selected child.

These men, to my mind, are the cause of all the trouble. Lobengula himself favoured them (but no more believed in them than I do). And why? His nation was too large and powerful; these men were his tools; they did his bidding; he sent for them, told them what he wanted, and they did what was called the "smelling out." Whole impiis who had become troublesome were destroyed by their order, and wives and women innumerable, headmen who aimed at too much power and were likely to give trouble, all were "smelt out" and butchered. The occupation of these men having collapsed, they had to look round and make one for themselves, and they have done so: the last news is that they have made one of Lobengula's sons king, but I don't think so.

Now to go back to the beginning. Rumours got about that the natives were going to rise, boys were leaving their employment at the mines and going home to the kraals from all over the town and country. I was then the only officer of A Troop of the then Rhodesian Horse in Buluwayo. I went to Captain Napier (senior officer) and asked him to have, as soon as possible, a general parade of the Rhodesian Horse and of the Maxim guns (three) at the range, and have some target practice; at the same time to order the native police to attend and let them see that neither the men nor the big guns had all gone.

This he did, but not until three weeks after the news of Jameson's surrender, or my suggestion; then the mischief was done, the native police had spread the news far and wide. Then came news of whole families murdered, of frightful mutilations, etc. Sixty mounted

men, ten from each troop of the Rhodesian Horse, were ordered out. I went in command. Napier went in command of the whole expedition. We took waggons, friendly natives (a few), Cape boys (a few), and a contingent on foot: in all about one hundred.

We were out ten days, and succeeded in rescuing about seventy white people from outlying districts where the murders had begun; we had orders not to attack natives, but to go from place to place as fast as possible to save life. On this patrol we saw sights. One family just sitting down to a mid-day meal, all butchered: the father, mother, two daughters, two sons (some full grown, some small), all on the floor together; but nothing on the table was touched. In another place a whole span of donkeys were assegaied in their harness and left in the road. The only living thing about was a black retriever dog under the waggon keeping guard till his master returned (the master had escaped). This waggon was laden with goods going out to a store, but nothing was touched. Then again one poor fellow, butchered first I should say, had his ears, nose, eyes and lips cut off, so that he should be of no use in after life (I say this because there is no doubt they think there is an after, as they bury their dead with food and their war weapons for future use).

I should say about two hundred people have been murdered and lost their lives in the war up to date. These savages deserve no mercy whatever, and merit to be starved out of the country—which in my opinion they will go very close to being before long.

During this first patrol, when we were out, we passed kraal after kraal of natives who assured us they were friendly and were not going to fight, yet we found before we got back to town they had all risen; why they did not attack us I cannot imagine, only that they were not organised properly. On this patrol we had only one horse shot; as far as I remember there were no other casualties. On the 4th of May we returned; the Rhodesian Horse were disbanded and the Buluwayo Field Force formed. I was ordered to raise a troop and given the command; I had 157 men, and could have had 300, only they had to be divided up, so reducing mine to about 100, the remainder being transferred to other troops.

Then came the great food question—what were we going to do if the Matabele cut us off from Mafeking, the rail terminus, 600 miles away, 100 miles of which were through hills, there being next to no transport owing to all the oxen having died along the road of rinderpest? Things did and do look serious in this line. For protection forts all along the road had to be built, and my troop was ordered out at once, fifty-seven men going to Fort Fig-Tree (or Molyneux) and the balance to the hills in the Mangwe Pass with me. There we built and held Fort Halsted for about a month; then we were relieved and went to Hopefountain, where we built Fort Hope, and where we were attacked by the Matabele, with the loss of one mule only, shot in the leg (we killed about thirty or forty).

I had about sixty men against 400 Matabele, and they had about 1500 men in a valley at the back, but were afraid to come on. I shot their headman at the commencement, and they called upon another for instructions as to what to do, but he had the funk; my men shot too straight.

We had only arrived at Hopefountain that day and relieved Colonel Plumer and his 500 men. We had no fort, we were on an exposed hill about 100 yards long and ten yards wide on the top. I made my men all lie down flat on the crest, and took twelve men out with me to drive them away from another hill about 150 yards off, because it afforded them too good a cover at too short a range. This I succeeded in doing, but they got on another about 300 yards off, and kept shooting for nearly four hours; they shot so badly I felt quite angry with them. I got on a box in the middle and shouted at them to say that if they could not do better they had best go home. I dare not go out to meet them or leave my hill; they would have been up it at once and taken all my mules, horses, cattle, etc., which we were guarding. When I first went out to drive them off the close hill they tried to cut me off, but the wily savage did not score; they lost five men by that move.

Hopefountain is the headquarters of the London Missionary Society, and the Revs. Helm and Carnegie were friends of Lobengula's and his translators of all correspondence. Now in this war their places (and fine houses they were) are burnt to the ground. This shows Loben had power and prevented it before. Now there is no head.

After Hopefountain we were ordered to join Captain McFarlane on a patrol with 500 men going to the Umguza River. We left Hopefountain and went into Buluwayo, where I had orders to take only forty good men and horses of my troop. We left Buluwayo a month ago and returned two days since, having been on horseback and on foot about 500 miles round the rivers. We only killed about thirty natives. We had a splendid trip and did, I should say, a lot of good. There were three columns, of 500 men each, started at the same time each in different directions. Colonel Plumer to the west, Captain McFarlane to the north, Lt.-Colonel Spreckly to the east, but none could catch the wily savage. Spreckly did best; the natives stood a while two days after leaving town, and about 200 were left behind, balance not having been seen since.

After that nothing was seen except that Spreckly reported that a large body of natives had got together on a strong hill, Thaba Imamba, about sixty-five miles out (where Colonel Plumer is now gone).

Plumer's column got in touch with natives once and killed about thirty. The same as ourselves; we got attacked on the third day in dense bush on the march; we were rear-guard and the natives wanted to get round us; there were about (as near as one can judge) 300 on each side of the road. We had one man wounded and three



horses shot, and a few days later one of our Cape boys was shot in the arm, and we lost one man from fever.

I took one day seventy sheep, three donkeys; another day we got twenty-four sheep and goats; column also got six horses, a few cattle and more goats. I also captured eighteen women, and next day three. I have a small boy and girl I brought home to work. These women seemed glad, and said so, that they were taken prisoners; they have been taken so far from home by their lords and made to carry such loads that they seemed tired out. They said the Matabele were flying before us. They knew of the three large columns going out and were frightened to attack. The rivers from one to another were one mass of footprints of men, women, and cattle all going before us. Immediately we return then the impi return, but they must keep near the rivers, water is so scarce. They know every movement of troops outside towns, and their system of runners is wonderful.

I, personally, only shot one native with my revolver in a charge through the Mahogany Forest. Two men got in my way, and I was obliged to ask them to move minus their arms. It was all done so quickly; we were on to them, passed them, and two miles through the forest at a canter, and then back again, before I realised that my commander-in-chief, Captain McFarlane, was missing. He, I found, had been chasing a woman and come a cropper over a tree, cut his nose and sprained his leg. However, he had collected about eighteen women while I had paid attention to the gentlemen.

We returned to town on the 4th of July, and all the Buluwayo Field Force are disbanded.

Colonel Carrington is here, and wants to reduce expenditure, and for this purpose is raising a police force of 500 to 700 men at five shillings per day and rations, the old pay being seven shillings and sixpence and rations. Next week I hope to send a photo of myself and Lieutenant Stewart, who has been with me all through, and I want badly to send you many photos of incidents, and of our forts, taken by one of my corporals—only at present he has fever. I will not delay this for any photos.

I have not put pen to paper for three months, I am ashamed to say. I have tried to do my duty, and have earned special praise. I have been personally and by letter thanked by Lord Grey, Rhodes, Metcalf, Sir R. Martin, Colonel Nicholson, and those in authority. I have also letters speaking of my forts in the highest terms. I have been offered a troop, and begged to take it, in the new police, but I declined with thanks. I have asked for promotion and good billets for those who have served me well, and they have all been granted. They consulted me as to the best way to officer the new troops. I am satisfied; I have a whole skin, though I have made no money, but I do not think the seed I have sown is altogether on barren soil.



I omitted to say, with our last patrol (Captain McFarlane's) we had with us Hon. C. Rhodes, Sir C. Metcalf, Mr. Jarvis, and Colonel Nicholson, as lookers-on. Rhodes was very chatty and pleasant. Whenever I could spare time we had tea together and talked over South Africa together. He is a long-headed man; and I should honestly say it is no more than jealousy that is at the bottom of all things with him. He is not jealous, but others are. Rhodes was like a king out here. He seemed all-powerful and a thorough diplomatist. I am very sorry he has—or, rather, they have asked him to resign, and that he has accepted the inevitable and done so; but in this, I have no doubt, all is for a purpose which is too deep for those behind the scenes.

Things have been very serious in Buluwayo. The niggers in thousands have been within a mile of the town, and all the people have been in laager on the market square for nearly two months. The niggers now keep a bit further off; but you dare not yet send any waggon out for wood, grain, grass or anything, without a strong escort. Now the Mashonas are reported to have risen, and Rhodes and Co. immediately posted off to Salisbury with a column. If this be so (and there is no doubt about it) I think the Matabele have brought pressure to bear and made them rise also. We can't get news; wire is cut; but we hear of several families having been murdered, and a great many of the Matabele went in that direction. Ten thousand destroyed may bring them to their senses; but you have got to catch them first! So much for the Matabele! And I hope you will read my scrawl. I had a lot to say and my thoughts run faster than my pen.

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Melton Prior of the *Illustrated London News* was here, and I gave him many photos of interest during the war; also a lot of Matabele curios; so keep a look-out in the paper for matters of interest. I missed Tuesday's mail, and since then news has come in of Colonel Plumer's column from Thaba Imamba. He has captured 1500 cattle, 2000 sheep and goats, some waggons with grain, mules, and 250 women and children, having beaten off the Matabele, who left them behind; but not without loss. Nine white men killed, thirteen wounded. This district is so thickly wooded that they dare not follow the Kaffirs, so they returned to Buluwayo with their booty. Next move will be to the Matopo Hills.

Provisions, I find, are dreadfully dear. Flour, per bag, £5, condensed milk 3s. 6d. a tin, butter 10s. a pound, and all in proportion. Meat we can scarcely get, and I must go out with my shot-gun and get a hare or a partridge.

Rhodes was at the Thaba Imamba fight, and under fire for hours. The niggers had splendid cover behind rocks, and it is impossible to say how many were killed.

## THE MAN-EATER.



LATE on an April afternoon, a year or two ago, William Dacres was sitting in the verandah of the hotel in the small hill-station of Sânanand, which stands near the summit of one of the loftiest mountains in India, south of the Himalayan range.

With the approach of evening the heat of the eastern sun was tempered by a delightfully refreshing breeze, and Dacres looked the very picture of comfort, as he lounged back in one of those reposeful long-armed chairs so dear to Anglo-Indians, smoking a big cheroot. He was, however, by no means so completely at his ease as his outwardly calm appearance seemed to indicate, for his thoughts were full, not of the beautiful view of tank and precipice and jungle before

him, nor of the pretty shot by which he had three hours before secured a fine bear, but of a subject which, if far more engrossing than these, was by no means so conducive to a placid and unruffled frame of mind.

Throughout the past cold weather Dacres had been quartered with a detachment of his regiment at Ahmedabad, in Gujerat, which is no great distance from Sânanand, and there he had met Joan Ramsay, the only child of Colonel Ramsay, of the Bombay Native Infantry. Joan had only arrived at Ahmedabad towards the end of January, but in a small station in India people have constant opportunities of meeting, and it had not taken long to convince Willie that all his future happiness depended upon his obtaining her hand in marriage. Few subalterns of five-and-twenty find themselves in a position to take a wife, but Dacres had lately come into a considerable sum of money and a fine property in the Midlands, and if, therefore, fortune should smile on him and enable him to persuade Joan to marry him, it would be open to him to retire from the army and live upon his estate. Indeed he sometimes felt that he ought to take this course under any circumstances, for he was no believer in absentee landlords.

But though Dacres had not poverty to contend with, he had another obstacle in his path, which it was far from easy to surmount.

Ever since he had definitely made up his mind to ask Joan to become his wife, she, on her part, had apparently set herself to prevent him from having an opportunity of putting his plan into execution. She had not indeed avoided him altogether, but she had treated him with a coldness which contrasted strangely with her former friendly manner, and had seemed determined not to allow him to see her except in the presence of others.

So successfully had she kept him at bay, that when he had been ordered to Sânanad at the end of March, he had been obliged to leave Ahmedabad without having told her of his love.

It appeared to him that there were two, and only two, possible ways of explaining her conduct. Either she did not love him, and knowing that he was in love with her, was anxious that he should clearly understand the state of her feelings towards him; or else she did actually love him, but was not sure that her love was returned, and so was hiding her real sentiments under a cloak of something nearly approaching aversion. Which of these explanations was the true one he could not decide, but he had no intention of losing her through any fear of a refusal, and as she had just arrived at Sânanad with her father and mother to spend the hot weather, his chance had come again.

Thus it was, that as he now sat smoking in the verandah, he was considering how he could best, in spite of Joan's opposition, contrive to arrange an early opportunity of pressing his suit. He was not destined to come to any conclusion, however, for his train of thought was suddenly interrupted by the appearance of his friend and fellow-subaltern, Arthur Hulton, who came hurrying up in a state of intense excitement.

"Ah, Dacres," he cried, "I hoped I should find you here. Such news! A man-eater! A man-eater here on Mount Sânanad! My shikari has come in with a coolie, and they say that a nigger was killed and eaten by a tiger early this morning on the old road. The men arrived some time ago, but I was out, and I've only just seen them. The man was killed where the road runs along the side of the big nullah about fifteen miles from here. I know the place well, and I expect you do too."

"Rather," answered Dacres; "it's as likely a place for a tiger as any on the hill. But there hasn't been a man-eater here for ages; are you quite sure there's no mistake? I thought the whole country round was shot so hard nowadays, that no tiger ever got old enough to take to that sort of thing."

"I don't believe there is any mistake," replied Hulton; "and indeed I don't know why there should be. The hill is shot hard certainly, but then think what frightfully difficult ground it is. Besides, after all, the beggar may only be maimed and not old. But, look here, my shikari is still waiting outside my tent, so suppose you come down and talk to him; you are better at this Bhil lingo than I am, and you might get some more details out of him."

"By all means," said Dacres, jumping up eagerly and seizing his hat. "I'll tell you what," he went on, "it'll be an uncommonly awkward job to kill the beast in such a bad bit of country."

"You may well say that," returned Hulton, as they went down the steps of the verandah together; "that big nullah is full enough of caves to be a perfect tiger-warren."

The two men had not left the verandah more than three or four minutes before Joan Ramsay came out of the hotel. Joan was a striking-looking girl of two-and-twenty; one who, though perhaps not strictly beautiful, would never in any company have remained unnoticed. She was somewhat above middle height, and every movement of her slender figure was exquisitely graceful. Her hair was straight, and dark almost to blackness, and formed a strong contrast to her pale clear complexion. But it was in her marvellous dark eyes that the chief glory of her face lay.

Joan sat down in one of the many arm-chairs which stood in the verandah, and no sooner had she done so than another girl of about her own age came hurrying out of the hotel. Kitty Pelham, the new arrival, was a daughter of a member of the Indian Civil Service, who had for many years been Colonel Ramsay's greatest friend. She and Joan had been sent home together to the same school in England, and there their friendship, begun in infancy, had been so firmly cemented, that at the time of which we are now speaking no girls could have been more devoted to one another.

"So here you are," cried Kitty, leaning against one of the pillars of the verandah, with her hands in the pockets of her little jacket; "I fancied you were about due to be up and dressed again, so I went to your room, and finding no sign of you there but the remains of some tea, and knowing you didn't mean to go out this evening, I thought you must be airing yourself out here."

"Yes, it's so nice and cool out here now," said Joan. "I suppose you'll be going to play tennis directly?"

"Not if I know it," replied Kitty. "I am going to stay here and keep you company. My mother has gone down to the Gymkhana already."

"It's very good of you to think of it," said Joan, "but I really couldn't allow you to do anything of the sort."

"Nonsense," returned Kitty laughing. "It's really a comfort to have an excuse for not playing just for once in a way. Besides, my charitable heart wouldn't allow me any peace, if I went off and left you in the lurch."

"Well, if you really don't very much mind staying," said Joan, "you may be quite sure I am not anxious to drive you away. You see, I am quite alone, for my mother has had to go down with the colonel to look at the little bungalow Mrs. Giles is just leaving, which might perhaps do for us."

"You'd find it difficult to drive me away even if you did want to," said Kitty, throwing herself into a chair. "I hope you feel rather

more lively than you did at tiffin," she went on; "you don't look quite such a miserable wreck as you did then."

"Thank you," replied the other smiling, "I didn't know I had looked quite so bad as that; but I certainly did feel rather shaky. The journey yesterday was terribly hot, and I got so tired that I couldn't sleep much last night. I've had a really good sleep this afternoon, though, and am quite rested now."

"That's just as well," said Kitty, "for you'll have to talk for Mr. Dacres as well as yourself at dinner to-night. As your presence deprives him of his tongue, it's only fair that you should undertake his share of the conversation."

"Mr. Devereux happens to be dining with the Wetheralls to-night," said Joan. "I heard him saying so this morning."

"Then, I'll be bound he accepted their invitation before he heard that yesterday was the day you were coming up," cried Kitty, looking very wise.

"I don't know why you should say that," said Joan; but her conscious face showed that she did in fact know perfectly well.

"Well, if you don't, I do," replied Kitty. "Anybody can see with half an eye that he's madly in love with you, and of course you're really quite aware of it yourself. And now I'm on the subject, I'll tell you something more, and that is that you are just as much in love with him. I daresay you would like to deny it, but it wouldn't be a bit of good, for I'm quite certain of it; and how you can treat him as you do, I can't for the life of me make out. At first you used to be quite civil and attentive to him, and now, when you have only to give him a little encouragement and you might both live happily ever after, you avoid him as much as possible, and when you are forced to meet him, you snub him abominably. It's utterly depressing!"

"Kitty, Kitty," answered the other gently, "I don't see why you need get so excited; my reasons are perfectly simple. When I first met Mr. Dacres I thought him very nice, and naturally liked to see him. At that time no idea of his falling in love with me ever crossed my mind; and indeed I am convinced that it was weeks before he thought of me in that way. It was a complete surprise to me when one day I suddenly noticed that his manner towards me had changed, and I understood that he was beginning to learn to believe that he loved me. Lately this belief has grown upon him, and I feel sure that, far from wanting any encouragement, he already intends to ask me to be his wife at the very first opportunity. I do not for an instant admit that I snub him as you say I do; but I certainly do try to avoid being alone with him, for if he proposed to me now I could not possibly accept him. I know, only too well, that he thinks he loves me; but I greatly fear that he may be mistaken; and I will never marry him unless I can feel perfectly certain that he is sure of his own mind."

"Nobody wants you to marry him if he doesn't love you," retorted Kitty sharply; "but as a matter of fact he does love you devotedly; and if you don't see it you must be as blind as a bat."

"I am not at all blind," replied Joan, a good deal nettled; "but I do not see it all the same. All that I do see is that he thinks he loves me, and that is not enough. I am determined not to accept him until I am convinced of his love; and as I have no wish to be obliged to refuse him, I shall persist for the present in the line I have taken up."

"You certainly are the most provoking thing I ever came across," replied her friend. "I shall have to go in and get a book, for if I go on listening to you talking such rubbish I shall lose my temper, and use language that will shock you."

Kitty accordingly marched off into the house, looking thoroughly disgusted. She found her book, and came back with it as far as the dining-room, the windows of which opened on the verandah, but the moment she got inside the door of this room she heard the voice of Willie Dacres outside, whereupon she turned round and crept noiselessly out again, determined not to mar his chance of speaking to Joan alone. She laughed softly to herself as she closed the door behind her, for she felt quite convinced that Joan's resolution would soon give way before her lover's pleading.

It had chanced that immediately after Kitty entered the hotel, Dacres had come through the gate of the compound. A fine-looking fellow he was, as he strode up the path, dressed in a not unpicturesque costume of striped flannels, bright-coloured cummerbund, and broad-brimmed Terai hat. He stood a trifle over six feet high, and was proportionately broad, and very muscular. His wavy hair, cut close in military fashion, was of a bright brown, and his small moustache was of the same shade. He had a pair of merry, honest, hazel eyes; and while the set of his mouth showed considerable firmness, his expression gave unmistakable evidence of the kindness of his heart.

Joan had been sitting with her back toward the compound gate, and as Dacres' tennis-shoes made no sound upon the well-worn surface of the path, he was at her side before ever she was aware that he was near her. Had she seen him coming, she would doubtless have followed her friend into the house, but now she hesitated to get up and leave him at once, for she feared that her so doing would be too marked an avoidance.

"I hope you have got over the fatigues of your journey, Miss Ramsay," Dacres said, as he sat down in a chair near her; "I don't wonder you were a bit knocked up; those little narrow-gauge carriages are abominably hot at this time of year."

"I've quite recovered now, thank you," she answered. "I was only a little tired, and it's so delightfully cool up here that it soon sets one right again."



"It is a pleasant change after Ahmedabad, isn't it?" he said, "but even here I've found it pretty hot to-day, scrambling about on the rocks."

"I've no doubt you have," she replied. "And have you had a successful day?"

"Pretty well," he answered. "I bagged one of the two bears I was after all right, the other moved before I got to the place where he was said to be lying up. But talking of shikar, what do you think I have just heard? Why, that a native was killed and eaten by a tiger last night, about fifteen miles from here on the old road to the station!"

"How horrible!" she said, and her face showed that the words were no formula, but came straight from her heart.

"Yes," he went on, "and the worst of it is, the beast is almost certain to live in the big nullah close by there, and it will be next to impossible to get at him, for the place is full of huge caves. Something will have to be done though, for until he is got rid of, the country round will be utterly unsafe. Mr. Hulton, whose shikari brought in the news, sent off at once to let the police know, so that they might warn people, for if anyone goes along that road to-night the chances are he'll come to grief."

"But if you find that the tiger does actually live in the nullah, and you can't get at him there, what are you to do?" she asked.

"That's just the difficulty," he said; "we shall have to try and invent something. Perhaps when he finds the road is deserted, he'll move his quarters and give us a better chance. Once, when every other method failed, a man-eater was killed by a daring sahib who went past its haunt dressed as a native postman, and shot it when it attacked him, but, of course only a man with an iron nerve and all the luck on his side too could possibly be successful in such a case. Nerve would be no good at all without luck, for the chances are a thousand to one that the tiger would spring out of the jungle straight on top of the man, and kill him with one blow before he could fire a shot at all."

"Well, I do hope you will find some way of killing him very soon," she said rising. "It's dreadful to think that while he lives he may take an unfortunate native at any moment."

"You may be very sure we shall do our best," he said. "But you are not going in, Miss Ramsay?"

"It's nearly time to dress for dinner," she returned apologetically, as she moved towards the door; "we dine so early here."

"But you needn't go just yet," he said, "and I have something I must say to you. I may not have another chance of seeing you alone for ages. Please wait a few minutes."

At first she made as though she would have left him in spite of his pleading tones; but she offered no resistance when he took her gently by the hand and brought her back to her chair. When she was

seated once more, he stood before her, and began to speak rapidly, in a voice low and tremulous with excitement.

"I love you," he said, "that is what I want to tell you. I love you with such love as three short months ago I did not know could exist. Sleeping I dream of you; waking you are always in my thoughts; and there is nothing, nothing I would not do to win you. Even as I speak I feel deeply enough my own unworthiness. My love is all I have to urge in my favour. But if you will only marry me, I will do all I can to ensure your happiness; for what could I desire more than that you should be happy? Will you be mine? Say yes, oh, say yes, I beseech you! Say yes, and make me the happiest man of all upon earth!"

While he was speaking Joan kept her eyes fixed upon the ground, and only her heightened colour showed that she heard his words. When he paused, waiting for her answer, she looked up and spoke.

"I am sorry, very sorry," she said sadly, "that you have asked me this question now, for indeed I cannot give you the answer you desire. If marriage is to be happy, there must be love—strong, lasting love on both sides. I know that I love you devotedly—I do not mind confessing it, since you have asked me to be your wife. I shall never cease to love you; but how can I be sure that you really love me? I cannot understand what there can be in me to love; and I fear that though you think you love me, you may in truth be mistaken. It is my misery and misfortune to be tormented by doubts. If you marry me, and find too late that that which you now think love is no love at all, your whole life will be wrecked, and that I cannot bear to think of. How—how am I to put your love to the test? In the old days of romance if a lady wished to know whether her knight loved her truly, she set him some difficult and dangerous task; then if his love for her was worthless he went his way, unwilling to risk his life for her sake; but if he really valued her above all else on earth, he gladly obeyed her behest, and in due time returned in triumph to claim her hand. It was easy for a lady in those days, but now it is so different. Magicians, giants, and dragons have vanished even from this wild country, and it would be wicked to send a good knight into danger except for some great purpose."

She paused for a moment; then, with an eager light in her eyes, she added abruptly:

"The moon is full to-night; will you, to prove your love, go alone in native dress and try to kill the man-eater you spoke of?"

Before he replied he turned and gazed for a moment across the great tank below; then, looking at her once more, he said in low but very distinct tones:

"It is hard that you should doubt my love. I have told you the truth—there is nothing I would not do to win you. I will go and make arrangements at once. Good-bye, Joan dear—my Joan; I shall not see you again this evening."

In his heart he thought that he should never see her more at any time, but he kept that thought to himself.

A gleam of pride and pleasure passed over Joan's face when she heard his words. "It is noble of you," she said, "but I will not say good-bye yet; you must come and see me just before you start."

"Very well," he replied. Then stooping down he raised her hand and pressed it to his lips, and left her without another word.

As soon as he had gone Joan hurried into Kitty's room, where she found that young lady stretched comfortably on a sofa with a book in her hand.

"You base deserter," said Joan, but with no anger in her voice. "It was too bad of you to leave me like that."

"I had no intention of spoiling sport," replied Kitty calmly. "But what has happened? Have you given in? You look uncommonly happy."

"I may well look happy," answered Joan, "for at last I do believe that Willie Dacres loves me. Just now he begged me to marry him, and I asked him whether he would prove his love by going alone to-night, dressed as a native, to try and kill the man-eater. He said at once of course he would, and went straight off there and then to get everything ready. Oh, Kitty, it is very wonderful, but how can I help believing that he loves me when he is so willing to risk his life to win me?"

"What man-eater? What are you talking about?" asked Kitty, with a puzzled look.

"Oh, I forgot you didn't know," said Joan. "It seems a man was killed by a tiger last night on the old road."

"Am I to understand, then, that Mr. Dacres has promised to go alone down that road to-night in native dress to try and kill the tiger?" asked Kitty slowly.

"Yes," replied Joan. "Isn't it splendid of him?"

"Splendid?" cried Kitty, springing up, her blue eyes blazing with anger. "How dare you? How dare you come here with a smiling face and tell me you have sent your unfortunate lover to certain death? Are you mad? You've treated him badly enough already, but this is disgraceful, heartless, wicked——"

"Oh, stop, stop!" cried Joan, "surely; you don't imagine I shall really let him go? You who know that I love him. He has promised to come and see me just before he starts, and then, of course, I shall tell him that he has done quite enough already, and that I ask for nothing better than to become his wife."

"I'm sure I beg your pardon," said Kitty, relieved; "but really you go on in such an extraordinary way that I don't know what to make of you."

Dacres, meanwhile, had gone down to his room, which was in a detached portion of the hotel, and had begun to make the preparations necessary for his perilous expedition. These took him

somewhat longer than he had anticipated, for his "boy" was an inordinate time procuring the native clothes in the bazaar, and it was nearly a quarter to eight when he went up to the main building in order to see Joan.

He had not noticed that it was so late, and he was greatly annoyed when he found that the hotel dinner had already begun.

This was indeed exceedingly awkward, for he could not go in and speak to Joan in the dining-room, since he well knew that if anyone discovered that she had sent him on such a mad errand he would infallibly be prevented from going. Nor, on the other hand, could he with any safety send for her to come and speak to him outside, for this would be such an unusual proceeding that it might very well be the cause of such questions being asked as would lead to the detection of his designs. Again, it was no use waiting until dinner was over, for then the whole party would probably come out into the verandah and it would be no whit easier to speak to Joan without being observed.

Apparently there was nothing to be done except to go without seeing her at all, so he went back to his room and wrote her a note explaining his conduct and telling her that he was on the point of starting. This note he left in his servant's hands with instructions to give it quietly to Miss Ramsay when dinner was over. At the same time he gave his servant another note to be taken down to Mrs. Wetherall immediately, apologising for his inability to keep his dinner engagement, and begging that he might be excused on the ground of urgent business.

It was a few minutes past eight when Dacres at last mounted his pony and set out, taking with him his heavy rifle and the white robe which he was to wear. He was accompanied by his shikari and his saice, or groom, and also by a couple of coolies who were to carry, turn and turn about, a basket containing a supply of food and drink.

It would be too much to say that he started with a light heart, for he fully realised the well-nigh insuperable difficulties of his undertaking; but his spirits were kept up by the knowledge that a man-eater had been successfully encountered in this way before, and also by the remembrance of the inestimable value of the prize which awaited him if he proved successful.

As he rode on through the night, however, he was at one time troubled with doubts in regard to Joan's feelings towards him.

If she did in truth love him, would she, he questioned, have sent him into imminent peril? At first it seemed to him impossible, but afterwards it struck him that it might be that in spite of what he had said to her, she had not thoroughly comprehended the dangers he had to encounter, or that perhaps her love made her so exaggerate his prowess that she looked upon him as capable of overcoming with ease difficulties which she knew that others could hardly hope to surmount.

This last idea was very pleasant, and was soon allowed to banish all his former doubts. So he went boldly on his way, determined to do his best, and if he might not win, at least meet his fate like a man.

While Dacres rode on thus to almost certain death, Joan, knowing nothing of his having started, was supremely happy in her new-born belief in the reality of his love. Half-past nine had struck before she began to feel at all uneasy. Even then she never dreamed that Willie had already gone, but she feared that upon consideration, he might have decided that it would be foolish to risk his life on the chance of winning her. Ten o'clock came and her anxiety increased every moment, and had become almost unbearable, when shortly before the half-hour, Willie's servant came to the entrance to the verandah with the note which had been entrusted to his care.

Joan did not know the man by sight, but when the envelope was handed to her, she recognised Willie's handwriting in an instant, and turned deathly white, for now she felt quite certain that he had made up his mind not to go, and being ashamed to meet her, had determined to let her know his decision through the medium of a letter.

She was, however, totally unprepared for the terrible blow which in fact awaited her, and when a glance at the contents of the note had showed her the hideous truth, she fell back in her chair with a shuddering cry of utter misery. The next moment she sprang to her feet, and turning to Kitty Pelham, who had been sitting beside her, cried in a hoarse, unnatural voice:

"He has gone! He has gone! He will be killed, and I—I shall have done it!"

"What on earth is the matter?" asked her father, hurrying up from the other end of the verandah.

"Tell him, Kitty; please tell him quickly," cried Joan; "my head is swimming."

Kitty accordingly told the whole story as concisely as possible, laying due emphasis on the fact that Joan had never really intended Dacres to go.

"Why, this is utter madness!" exclaimed Colonel Ramsay, when she had finished. "He must be followed and stopped. How long has the sahib been gone?" he asked, turning to the servant.

"The sahib went at eight o'clock," answered the man.

"Then why the devil didn't you bring the letter before?" demanded the Colonel furiously.

"Dacres sahib said, Give it when dinner is over. Dinner is over, and I have given it," replied the servant, unmoved.

"Confound these niggers!" said the Colonel, fuming with anger. "Time means nothing to them." Then he asked rapidly, "Was the sahib riding? Did he go alone?"

"The sahib rode," was the answer. "The shikari and the saice went with him; also two coolies to carry the tiffin basket."

"By Jove, then, we may catch him yet, for he must ride slowly,

and he'll leave his pony with his men well out of danger. There's no time to be lost, though, for he's got a fearfully long start. Will you come with me, Hulton? I should be much obliged."

"With the greatest possible pleasure, sir," answered Hulton, who chanced to be the only other man present. "I'll order my pony at once, and just go and get a rifle and some cartridges."

"Would you mind ordering my pony, too, Hulton," said the Colonel. "I'll take the bay, Omar; he's the fastest I've got here."

"And please order Sunbeam for me, Mr. Hulton," said Joan. "I must come with you."

"Nonsense, Joan," said her father. "You can't do any good; and, in fact, to put it plainly, you'll be very much in the way."

"Besides," added her mother, who had come out of the house in the meantime, "you will kill yourself; you know you are dreadfully tired already."

"I am not in the least tired now, mamma," said Joan, "for I had a long sleep this afternoon. The ride won't hurt me a bit, and I shall go mad if I stay here doing nothing. As for my being in the way, that's quite impossible, for we can ride the whole distance; and even papa must admit that Sunbeam is faster than Omar."

"Oh, well, I suppose you must have your own way as usual," said her father; "but mind you look sharp about changing your clothes."

Mrs. Ramsay also withdrew her opposition, and Joan instantly rushed off into the house to put on her riding things. Her father followed her in for a similar purpose; while Hulton hurried off to order the ponies.

None of the three wasted a moment in getting ready, and in an incredibly short space of time they were riding rapidly down the steep pitch which leads out of Sânan.

They spoke but little as they rode. The two men were grave and anxious, for they felt that failure was at least as likely to attend their efforts as success. Joan's feelings who may describe?

About a mile beyond the place where the roads divided they found Willie's pony tethered by the side of the track, and his four men perched up in a tree close by, well out of the reach of the tiger if he should chance to come that way. The Colonel inquired eagerly how long it was since Dacres sahib had gone on, and from the answers he received, albeit these were too vague to be altogether satisfactory, it appeared that Dacres could not be more than a short distance ahead. The party pressed forward, therefore, with some hope at last that their pursuit might have a successful termination.

Something less than a mile and a half further on, the road, after passing over a lofty ridge, began to descend rapidly towards the plain, skirting in its course the nullah in which the man-eater was believed to lie up during the daytime. When the riders reached the summit of the ridge, Hulton suggested that they should fire a few shots, as their doing so would be likely to scare the tiger back into the depths



of the nullah if, as seemed only too probable, he was now watching the road. The Colonel thought the suggestion an excellent one, and added as a further reason for putting it into practice, that the sound of the shots would very possibly bring Dacres back up the hill, in the belief that someone had been attacked.

Hulton accordingly let off four barrels in rapid succession, and they all listened with bated breath in the hope of hearing some answering shot or shout. No answer came, however, so they pushed on as before.

They had now reached the very wildest part of the road. On the right the ground fell rapidly away in a succession of fearful precipices, faced at no great distance by others equally terrific. On the left rose a gentle slope, studded with rocks, and scantily clothed with thin bush-jungle. The road itself was bad in the extreme, and the progress of the party down it was not only painfully slow, but fraught also in places with considerable danger. They had made their way with great difficulty about half-a-mile down the hill, when they were suddenly startled by a wild yell coming from some little distance ahead.

The three pulled up with scared faces, and hardly had they done so before the report of a rifle rang out, to be echoed and re-echoed by the rocky sides of the nullah in thunderous reverberations. These had not wholly died away when the furious roar of a tiger showed that the bullet had failed to do its work. There was a momentary pause, and then another report, and when the echoes of the second shot were hushed there followed a great silence.

At the sound of the first shot the Colonel had hastily dismounted, given his reins to Hulton, and unslung his rifle; he now said hurriedly: "I believe Dacres has killed him; he's a dead shot, and would hardly fail with both barrels. I can't understand the cry, but it sounded like a nigger. If the tiger had sprung on Devereux, it would have killed him right off, and he would never have fired. Omar will be in my way if there should be any more shooting to be done, and I can go quite as fast without him over such ground, so will you hold him and stay with my daughter while I go and see what has happened. I'll shout if it's all right, and blow my whistle if I want help."

"I wish you would let me go instead of you, sir," said Hulton. "You see I'm not a married man."

"Very good of you, Hulton," said the Colonel, "and many thanks, but I'd rather go myself. Besides, there'll be no danger now."

The Colonel had been loading his rifle as he spoke, and he now hurried on down the road with the rapid, stealthy step of one thoroughly accustomed to jungle-work. He had not advanced more than three hundred yards when, on rounding a sharp turn, he suddenly saw before him a man in native costume, leaning on a rifle, and gazing at a tiger which lay stretched at his feet.

"Dacres, is that you? Are you all right?" cried the Colonel.

"All right, sir," came the answer, "but what on earth brings you here?" he continued, as the latter came up.

Colonel Ramsay gave a glance at the tiger, and then seizing Dacres' hand he shook it warmly, saying as he did so, "Well done, my lad, well done! I never in all my life heard of a pluckier bit of work. I couldn't have believed you would have killed him."

"As it happened he gave no trouble at all," said Dacres, slipping off the white robe in which he had been wrapped and appearing in his ordinary shikar suit, "but he's killed another wretched nigger."

"Has he, by Jove!" ejaculated the Colonel. "Ah, that's the body there, I suppose," he continued, noticing for the first time a white heap lying by the side of the road about thirty yards further on. "Do you mind just helping me to get him out of sight before I call the others? Poor beggar, I expect he saved your life."

"He and the shots I heard between them," said Dacres as he assisted the Colonel to hide the corpse. "I suppose you fired the shots? What were they at?"

"At nothing," answered the Colonel; "they were only intended to stop you."

"It was uncommonly lucky for me that you fired them," said Dacres; "I shouldn't have been alive now if you hadn't. But, by the way, I haven't asked who are with you."

"Hulton and my daughter," said the Colonel. "We were obliged to bring Joan, she wouldn't stay behind. It was on her account I wanted to clear off the body."

Dacres looked puzzled. "I can't understand why you have all come," he said.

"That's easily explained," said the Colonel, as they walked back up the road; "the root of the whole matter being that Joan never really meant you to risk your life like this. She only wanted to see how much you were willing to do for her sake, and intended to stop you before you actually started. You upset everything by rushing off in that impetuous way without seeing her again. Then your fool of a servant didn't give her your chit until nearly half-past ten, and a nice job we've had to get here even as soon as this, I can tell you. And after all we should have been too late to help you if you had got into any difficulty. I'll call the others down now, and then you can tell us how you contrived to bag the tiger."

All this time the unhappy Joan had been half dead with terror and suspense, her poor heart beating so wildly that it seemed as though each convulsive throb must be its last. Her companion did his best to cheer her; but he was himself so nervous and excited that his efforts were hardly of a character likely to prove very successful. The moment the Colonel's welcome shout reached their ears, the two set off down the rough track at a breack-neck pace, Joan leading the way, and Hulton following with the third pony as best he could.

"Are you hurt, Willie?" cried Joan, as she slipped from her saddle.

"Not touched, thank you," he answered.

"Thank God!" she said fervently, and made as though she would have embraced him, but suddenly staggered and fell fainting into his arms.

"This is a bad job," said her father, looking at her ruefully, "for not a drop of water is there about here; and how on earth are we to bring her round?"

Fortunately the Colonel was soon relieved of his difficulty, for his daughter's faintness was hardly more than momentary, and almost immediately she raised her head and looked up into Dacres' face. He gazed tenderly down into the depths of those wondrous eyes as he whispered:

"I know all about it, sweetheart: don't distress yourself. I was mad to think you really meant me to come."

She, on her part, burst into tears, saying, in a choking voice:

"Oh, Willie, Willie, I thought I had killed you! If I had found you dead, I should have followed you. I could not have lived without you. Can you ever forgive me for having doubted your love?"

His answer to this question was not expressed in words; but it appeared to give entire satisfaction.

As soon as it had become evident that Joan was recovering, her father and Hulton had begun to busy themselves about making fast the ponies, none of which seemed willing to go any nearer to the dead tiger. Over this simple business, the two men, possibly out of consideration for the lovers, contrived to take an abnormally long time. In point of fact, they did not finish until Joan and Dacres had quite recovered their self-possession, when all four walked back towards the man-eater.

"He's old and in very bad condition; but he's a big one for this part of the country," said Colonel Ramsay, after they had stood looking at the body for some moments. "And now, Dacres, we are all wild to know how you contrived to kill him."

"That's easily told," said Dacres, "but I'm afraid the story's not very creditable to me, for the truth is I made a thundering hash of my first barrel or I shouldn't have had to use the second at all. I was walking quietly along the road a little way back listening intently and peering anxiously about when I heard your four shots. I was much puzzled to know what they meant, but I had a hazy idea that some other sahibs must have come out of Sânan on the same errand as myself, and met with the tiger. I wondered whether I had better go back and see what had happened, and stopped a moment to think. I concluded that I had better go on as far as the bottom of the hill so that I might be able to say I had done all I possibly could to get a shot; for if I turned back to the firing I should only see the

tiger if he were already dead. I only waited two or three minutes in all, but those minutes undoubtedly saved my life. I went on again slowly and carefully as before. After a short time I heard voices in front of me, and when I turned the corner back there I could see two niggers coming towards me. I had only just caught sight of them when the tiger sprang down out of the jungle and bowled one over, stone dead, apparently, for he never uttered a sound. The other man gave a yell and rushed off down the road. The tiger took no notice of him, but kept on mauling the man he had got down. I crept on a little, and then getting a fair broadside shot I let drive. I ought to have killed the beast on the spot, but I suppose I was bothered by the light, or my unusual clothes or something, for I bungled my shot, and though I wounded him pretty badly I did not disable him. He turned towards me at once, and in another moment he gave a roar and charged. I let him come very close before I fired again, for I couldn't afford to make another mistake. It was a bit exciting, but when I did let go I was lucky enough to roll him over like a rabbit. I found the nigger he had mauled as dead as a door-nail, as you might suppose, and I felt pretty thankful that your shots had made me delay just long enough to escape his fate. I suppose the two men must have come into the road by some cross-country path, for they could hardly have passed through the village at Sānand Road Station without hearing of the man-eater."

"It was Hulton who thought of firing those shots," said the Colonel, "and it certainly seems to have been uncommonly lucky for you that he did think of it. But all I can say is your coming out here alone like this was simply heroic, and certainly no one ever better deserved a slice of luck."

While the Colonel had been speaking, Hulton had been stooping down and looking more closely at the tiger. He now stood up and said, "What a pity! The skin is wretchedly bad. It's worth absolutely nothing, I'm afraid. What do you think, Dacres?"

"I'm quite of your opinion," said Dacres. "Unfortunately one can't expect to get a decent skin from a man-eater. I must take some measurements, and then I think I'll just keep the skull and claws as trophies. The teeth are almost as bad as the skin, but that can't be helped. Perhaps you wouldn't mind sending my men on here with my pony as you go back; I shall want my shikari to help me."

"Look here, Dacres," put in the Colonel, "it seems to me that the best plan will be for you to start off at once and escort my daughter home; she ought to get back as soon as possible, and as for you, you've done a rare night's work already. If you'll send your men down here with the tools, you can trust us to measure the tiger correctly and so forth, for you know I'm an old hand at that kind of thing. I say, though, before I let you chaperon the young lady I suppose I ought to ask whether I am right in supposing that you are

actually engaged to her, for you know you haven't found time to tell me so yet or to ask my consent."

"You are quite right, papa," said Joan, answering for Dacres before the latter could speak. "Willie says he will take me in spite of all that has happened, and you know you always let me have my own way, so I don't suppose you will make any objection."

"Don't be impudent, you spoilt child," said her father, "but get on your pony and make a start." Then, turning to Dacres, he once more shook him heartily by the hand, saying at the same time, "I am delighted to hear it. I shall be indeed proud to have you as a son-in-law, and I wish you both joy with all my heart."

Hulton added his congratulations, and Joan was soon riding up the hill again with Dacres walking by her side. When they reached the place where the shikari and the other men were waiting, Dacres had the tiffin basket brought out, but as the lovers were neither of them in a condition to attend much to such everyday matters as eating and drinking, Colonel Ramsay and Hulton eventually came in for the lion's share of the contents of the basket. Their hasty meal concluded, Joan and Dacres sent the natives down to help with the tiger, and started homeward once more.

Out of kindness to Sunbeam they rode very slowly; but so much had they to say to one another that it is hardly probable they would have made any better progress if they had both had the freshest of ponies. Be that as it may, the jungle-fowl had been crowing for more than an hour when they reached the steep pitch leading up to Sânanâ. Here they pulled up as they had done many times on the road, and Dacres, slipping his arm round Joan's waist, whispered, "When shall it be, darling?"

"Whenever you like, Willie," she said. "Or perhaps I had better say as soon as it can be conveniently managed, or I shouldn't wonder if you would be wanting me to be married without a wedding-dress, or any trousseau at all. And will you always, always love me as you do now?" she continued. "Promise me that you will, even when I am old and ugly."

"Ah, Joan, you will never be old in my eyes, or ugly in anyone's," he answered; "and I love you with a love too strong ever to die."

"I am indeed happy," she said gazing fondly into his eyes. "Far happier than I deserve."

"So may you ever be happy, Joan," he replied kissing her tenderly; and so hand in hand they rode on up the hill.



## A DREAM OF THE PAST.

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF "IN LOTUS LAND," "LETTERS FROM MAJORCA," ETC., ETC.



SAN PABLO.

IT was the next day.

We had again been standing on the further bank of the river, watching the flowing waters. They were dark and deep; a mighty stream that swept through the seven arches of the wonderful bridge, reflecting its outlines. We had contemplated for the twentieth time the marvellous effect of the domes and towers of El Pilar rising like an eastern vision against the clear sky: had asked ourselves over and over again where we should

find a fairer and a more striking view: and found the question difficult to answer. We had strolled over that same bridge back into the town, where the charm of outline and ancient atmosphere so strangely disappeared; had passed the fine old Exchange; crossed the square with its plashing fountain and ever-changing group of chattering women filling their artistic pitchers.

Finally we had found ourselves within the cathedral, also for the twentieth time, lost in this architectural splendour; this wonder of a bygone age; where all the fret of every-day life had no room for existence.

As we looked, we noticed a portly figure hurriedly crossing the aisles in our direction. At the first moment he did not see us. An expression of intense amiability and benevolence was upon the large round face, that would otherwise have been so ugly, and by its aid was made so beautiful. He raised his eyes, and came down upon us as an eagle to its prey.

"You are here!" he cried. "I have been wondering all the



morning why I did not come across you ; in what ancient nook you had buried yourselves. I was now on my way to your hotel to ask whether you had departed to other fields, and to find out why you did not come to me last night. To-night I shall make sure of you. You shall dine with me—I will take no refusal. For once the old priest's frugal fare must suffice you. It shall be a fast day. Abstinence from flesh-meat occasionally is good, even for travellers. Tell me you will come. Do not pain me by refusing, or make me guilty of the rudeness of pressing you too much. Juanita, my old housekeeper, tells me she is quite equal to preparing you *un diner maigre*."

Pressure was not needed. We were too glad to accept the good priest's invitation. He was given to hospitality in the best sense of the word, and we readily promised to dine with him. For us, the *diner maigre* had no terrors.

"That is good," he replied in his rich round voice. "I shall expect you at seven o'clock, though we shall not dine until eight. So you are still lost in amazement at this architectural dream. The oftener you see it, the more beautiful it becomes. With few interruptions I have looked upon it daily for forty years, and every morning its charm seems new and strange to me. Well, since I have seen you I shall not go to your hotel. I have sundry visits to pay to poor sick folk. Until the infirmities of old age become too strong for me I will not give them up. And before that happens I trust a merciful Creator will remove me to scenes where there is neither age nor infirmity nor sick poor in need of consolation."

He hurried away, leaving us to the marvellous interior. We were glad to go to the old canon's, and felt it would be our opportunity for laying before him that interesting but unhappy case.

As the clock struck seven we rang the bell. The drooping handle was in itself an object of art: a wonderful specimen of iron work cunningly wrought. We were not privileged to use the hidden spring, which moreover we could not discover. The bell was immediately answered by Juanita in grey hair, placid face and black silk gown; a picture of high respectability. She greeted us with a serene smile and assured us that we were welcome: tones and manner a reflection of her master's—the fruits of long and faithful service. Hers was a face to be taken upon trust.

As we entered, the canon came out of his dining-room.

"I like this punctuality," he cried, "and you are doubly welcome. As our frugal dinner is not ready, I will take you through my little house whilst a glimmer of daylight lasts. Let us first lay siege to Juanita's regions—my good old housekeeper who has been with me or mine for fifty years—ever since she was a maiden of ten. We will explore the mysteries of her preparations for our benefit. I always feel like a child when gazing upon her handiwork."

A long passage panelled in old dark oak led from the dining-room

to the kitchen. Here, indeed, we found ourselves in fairyland. The room was far larger than the dining-room. Latticed windows looked out upon a small courtyard, a half conservatory, where bloomed a profusion of sweet-smelling flowers. The kitchen itself was a picture; walls were panelled, the ceiling was of oak: everything bore the unmistakable tone of age. Facing the windows were hooks and shelves bearing the brightest of brass pots and pans. The latticed windows, the flowers beyond all, here found their reflections multiplied. Every brass implement was of the most artistic description. At right angles with this, other shelves bore a small but special dinner-service of old Spanish ware, the only example of its kind we had ever seen. Below this was an old dresser on which the silver used by the canon was displayed, with here and there an artistic water-pot and cooler.

In the centre of the spacious kitchen was a large, solid and substantial oak table. At one end lay some work at which Juanita had evidently lately been busy. At the other end was a small pile of the curious Spanish-ware plates, evidently on their way to the dining-room.

Under one of the latticed windows was Juanita's help-mate: a young woman busily engaged in preparing a dish of olives. One could have lived in this room with the greatest pleasure, and never asked for anything more artistic or luxurious. A savoury smell, as of frying of eggs with sweet herbs, was in the air; yet were there no signs of stove or cooking. A huge chimney-place there was, in which half a dozen people might have sat comfortably; but nothing was to be seen excepting a couple of old-fashioned dogs on which some lighted wood and peat sparkled and crackled, whilst the blue smoke went curling up the wide opening.

"Wonderful!" we cried, taking in the incomparable effect of the whole room. "We are in a house of magic."

"Very simple magic," laughed the old canon. "I fear that in sleight of hand Juanita and I would be failures. Her magic lies in preparing simple dishes."

"But where are they prepared?" we said. "There is neither sign nor sound of cooking here."

"Come and see," laughed the canon; and crossing the kitchen, he led the way through a further door down a short passage into a small, whitewashed room beyond. Here on a large stove Juanita and her hand-maiden conducted their mysteries. A dozen brass pans were upon the stove, and every one of them seemed in use.

"Surely these are not for dinner!" we cried. "It was to be a fast-day."

"A fast-day as far as flesh is concerned," laughed the canon. "That does not absolutely mean that you are to starve. I know no more than you what Juanita has prepared. If I intruded upon

her province with the faintest suggestion, she might retaliate by sending us in a Barmecide's feast. I fear our faces would lengthen before the empty dishes—that is if anything could lengthen mine," he gurgled, turning his large, round, delightful countenance full upon us. "I see signs of approaching readiness in those steaming sauce-pans," he cried. "Let us continue our inspection. Daylight dies; nothing remains but the afterglow."

We passed again through the charming old kitchen, where the logs on the great hearth blazed and crackled.

"Summer and winter, Juanita will have a fire," said the old canon, pointing to the crackling logs. "She declares that she is growing old and shivery, and the bright flames chase the vapours from her mind."

We passed up the old oak staircase. Everywhere we came upon the same signs of age; the same artistic old panelling; bedrooms with ancient oak furniture, oak ceilings finely carved. A perfect house of its kind, and much larger than it appeared from the outside. One room was the canon's own sanctum, fitted up with bookshelves where reposed many a precious volume. Amongst his treasures he produced some ancient illuminated manuscripts of rare value. His desk, at which he sat and worked, was placed near a latticed window in a corner of the room, through which one just caught sight of the tower of *Il Seo*.

Again we involuntarily exclaimed that so perfect a house should be found in Zaragoza.

"It is mine by inheritance," said the canon. "Early in the sixteenth century it belonged to a far-away ancestor who was Bishop of Zaragoza. Dying, he left it to his brother and his children, of whom I am a direct descendant. The singular thing is that between the bishop and myself there has not been a single ecclesiastic in the family. When I die, the direct line of nearly four centuries will be broken. The house will pass to my nephew, who is mixed up with Court life and has married a Court beauty. He is already nearly middle aged, with sons and daughters growing up. As far as possible I have ordained that the house shall never be altered. But who can legislate for what shall happen after death?"

We returned to the dining-room, where we soon found that our fast was to be in reality a light, refined and delicate feast. Fish of more kinds than one, dressed to perfection; eggs and sweet herbs in many forms and disguises; choice fruits. And from his cellar the canon brought forth exquisite wines; priceless *Johannisberg* and *Lafitte*; whilst with our coffee he gave us *Chartreuse* fifty years old. Yet he himself passed over all delicacies, limiting his dinner to eggs and sweet herbs, with which he drank coffee.

"You censure others by the dignity of excelling," we said. "Though crowding upon us these indulgences, you abstain from all."

"I believe in *St. James*, who said, 'Use hospitality one to another

without grudging," returned the canon. "I delight in doing this. Heaven has blessed me with means; how can they be better employed than in ministering to others, whether rich or poor? As for myself, do not think I am exercising self-denial. Habit is second nature. Did I not tell you that the pleasures of the table had nothing to do with my physical rotundity. But heaven be praised, I can still manage to roll over the ground without trouble."

Juanita waited upon us with unruffled ease, her comely face looking the delight she evidently felt in dispensing her luxuries. Her hands were clothed in black silk mittens; her black silk gown rustled with a gentle dignity as she quietly moved about, taking plates and dishes from her hand-maiden who stood outside the door. Some wonderful old silver adorned the table, and everything from first to last showed the ruling hand and head of one born and bred in an atmosphere of refinement.

We had not sat down to table until eight o'clock, and when coffee was served the old clock on the oak mantelpiece had chimed nine, and its last vibrations had long died upon the air. Yet the time had passed with lightning rapidity, for the canon in giving us some of the experiences of his long life, and in telling us many legends of Zaragoza, had engaged our whole interest and attention.

When Juanita had handed us coffee, and left the charming old silver coffee-pot steaming upon the table dispensing its aromatic fumes, she made us collectively a courtly curtsy at the door and withdrew.

Then came our opportunity, and we related to the canon our previous day's adventure, with all its sadness and its apparently hopeless element. He listened with earnest attention and sympathy.

"The world is full of these instances," he cried with a profound sigh, when we had ended. "Do you wonder at my frugal living when I hear of these wrecked lives? I have seen so much of this terrible vice. I know how hard it is to conquer, how seldom the victory is gained. It requires daily care on the part of one stronger than the tempted, and too often even that fails. But who is this poor frail creature? She must and shall be rescued if human aid under divine help, can avail. For heaven will not always save us in spite of ourselves. 'My spirit shall not always strive with men.'"

Her name and domestic history had been withheld to the last. We now explained who she was, who her father had been; his position under government, his sudden death from grief: and we gave him her card, which bore both her married and her maiden name—the latter written in pencil: *Eugenie de Cuzman*.

The canon quite started as we spoke it and threw himself back in his chair.

"Is it possible!" he cried. "Is it possible! But life is full of these coincidences. Verily the Divine Hand holds the threads of the world's human actions; and what we call coincidences are the silent

drawing together of these threads for ordained purposes. De Cuzman was my intimate friend, though many years my junior. He would come and spend a week at a time with me here, but his visits were not frequent. I knew little of his wife, still less of his child, whom I saw but once when she was about ten years old. I was told of his death, I had heard of a tragedy, but the full details I now learn for the first time. It is one of the saddest stories I ever listened to. For the sake of the father I must make every effort to save the child. It will be a hard task, but only needing the more courage. To-morrow I will seek her out. She must be taken from this unwholesome life and excitement. I will tell her that she owes it to the memory of her father, in atonement for the wrong she did him, to place herself in my hands; to give up her will to mine. She shall come into this house and take up her abode with us for a time. Her reform shall be my daily care. Juanita, for all her placid face, has plenty of good sense and decision; she is quite equal to being her companion and to watching over her. It shall be done. I have seldom failed in what I earnestly took in hand, and I must not fail now."

This was good news. A load was taken from our mind. Surely all this would bear good fruit. There seemed every hope that this poor creature would be rescued and restored. When we got up to leave, it was with a light heart. The time had passed quickly and the hands on the old clock pointed to eleven.

"Alas, you are going away. When shall we meet again?" said the canon in tones as melancholy as we felt sure ever fell from his lips. Not his to look on the sad side of life. He passed his days shedding light and warmth around him like a substantial sunbeam, distributing favours with both hands.

"When shall we meet again?" he repeated. "Perhaps never! Even the splendours of Il Seo may fail to draw from you a second visit; whilst the welcome awaiting you from the old priest will be altogether forgotten."

We assured him that ingratitude was not one of our sins. The delightful evening he had given us would be remembered for ever; we truly declared it a privilege and a pleasure to know him; a sorrow to say farewell.

"It is a word I never utter," quickly returned the canon. "With me it is ever *au revoir*; if not in this world then in the next. And we have now a bond of sympathy between us in this poor creature whom I am going to save and rescue whether she will or no. She is our joint protégée; I shall write and keep you posted up in her welfare. Be sure that if any power can possibly reclaim her, she is saved. *Au revoir*—let us leave it at this. Heaven be with you—and peace."

Full of peace indeed was the night as we passed out into the darkness. The stars seemed to shine down upon the world with a serene benediction. Much of the pain we had felt last night was

removed. Surely no chance hand had guided us. The work begun to-night was destined to a successful issue.\*

Before turning in, we went once more round to our favourite spot. It was our last look by starlight upon the deep, dark flowing river, the wonderful old bridge, the faint outlines of El Pilar rising beyond. To-night all was shadowy and indistinct; a dream vision; and the only sound to be heard was the swirling of the waters through the seven arches of St. Peter's bridge.

The next morning we left Zaragoza by an early train for Tarragona. It was a long roundabout journey. Again we had to pass through Lerida, where we had twenty minutes to wait. As chance would have it, our landlord was on the platform, speeding parting guests. We went up to him and drew him apart.

"Tell us," we said; "what about the dragging of the well? Has it been done?"

Our late host threw up his hands. "Oh, señor," he cried, "I shiver and shake at the very thought of it. I had it done the very day after you left. And what do you think came up?"

"Two skeletons?"

"The keys, señor: the missing keys—and a pair of slippers, very much down at heel."

"And the skeletons?"

\* The following letter from the old canon, very recently written, one of many, we transcribe for the benefit of the reader:

"You will be anxious to hear how our patient has been progressing since I last wrote to you. Better and better. There is nothing but good news to send you. I think I may almost affirm that Eugenie is now 'clothed and in her right mind.' The cure is effected. For many months she has not looked upon the wine cup, and declares that all desire for it has left her. I believe it has. As you know, the very day after our first and last evening together, I sought her out, told her I was her father's friend, explained to her the atonement that was in her power. The poor creature, overcome with misery, sorrow and remorse, burst into such tears as I have never seen shed, and yielded without a murmur to my wish. I would give her no time for reconsideration, and that very day she took up her abode in my house. She never leaves it, except in company with Juanita or myself. There has been no trouble from the beginning. It almost seemed as though the calm and peaceful atmosphere of our little household at once exorcised the evil spirit within her. Her better nature has triumphed, and I am persuaded that she will not fall away again. I do not intend that she shall. As long as I live this is to be her home. She asks nothing better; declares that for the first time in her life she has found peace and happiness. Her gratitude to you is unbounded. If I only mention your name, tears spring to her eyes. I believe she would lay down her life for you. She begs that you will one day come again to see not the old Eugenie who accosted you in the church; she is dead and buried; but the new Eugenie who is living and has taken her place. She wonders what influence gave her courage to speak, and declares it was some unseen spirit or power which compelled her to go forward whether she would or no. The moment she saw you this spirit took possession of her and she was passive in its hands. Never before had such a thing happened to her. I put it down to other and higher influence. These things do not happen



"Not a vestige, señor; not a single bone. I told you the well communicated with the river, and the river with the sea. They must have floated out, and probably are now reposing in the Panama Canal."

"But why the Panama Canal?"

"Everything bad must drift there, señor. I lost a large sum in the wretched affair."

"And you have seen no ghost since we left?"

"No ghost, señor, and no mysterious sounds. All the same we have had a domestic drama."

"The Gorgon?" we suggested.

"Exactly, señor. Your penetration is wonderful. As she was leaning over her wash-tub, the waiter came behind and ducked her head in the soapsuds. Her mouth—you know her mouth—was wide open, and she swallowed a good gulp of soapy water; upon which, presto! quick as lightning she took up her washing-pin and had it over his head. Such a crash! Down went the waiter, and the Gorgon was stooping over him with wet locks like a dripping mermaid, gloating and mouthing upon the ruin."

"And the waiter?"

"In the hospital, señor, with a broken head. That is why I am here. I have to come to the station myself, and be my own porter,

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by chance. Heaven may spare my life for some years. During that time Eugenie's home is assured. She is now as a daughter to me; shares my modest repasts; occupies herself in the affairs of the house; spends much of her time with Juanita. She reads much, and is studying science with me. Her intelligence is of a high order and she has a wide grasp of mind. By-and-by she will outrun me. Truly it is a pearl of price we have rescued from the fire. And I too have my reward. The house is brighter since she came to it. Even Juanita, who once only smiled, now laughs on occasion. She has taken a great affection for Eugenie, and when I am no longer here will transfer her services to our protégée. Heaven be praised, I am able to leave them independent of the world. And I have enlisted my nephew's sympathy in the matter. Eugenie is to be much with them when I go hence, but this is to be her home; hers for her life. Yet who can tell? She is young. If you thought her beautiful then, what would you now say to that calm and radiant face, the clear and steadfast eyes? One day she will probably marry again; and in a second and more worthy choice find all the happiness and protection that she missed in her first terrible and headstrong mistake.

"And now for the old question: When are you coming? Juanita bids me say that all the resources of her simple art are waiting to be put forth in your favour. She declares she never was happier than that evening when she waited upon us and dispensed her simple luxuries. Eugenie says she shall never be at perfect rest until you have witnessed her transformation. For myself, I have a new work on Natural Philosophy to show you. I long once more to pace together the aisles of our beloved cathedral. At my age I live from day to day, grateful to heaven for each new day in this bright world. But it behoves me to sit loosely to all things. The end may come at any hour, it cannot be very far off now. The old man longs to welcome you yet once again. Deny him not."

and see my guests off. Servants are the bane of one's life. Like the flies, they were invented for our torment. But, señor, these troubles are nothing compared with the relief of finding that the skeletons had cleared out to sea."

Our train came up and we went our way, leaving Lerida behind us with its fine outlines, and the landlord to the difficult task of managing his womenkind.

So far we had travelled on the line before, but now branched off towards Tarragona. We did not again see Manresa, but even a comparative approach to its neighbourhood brought all the splendid and imposing outlines, the blood-red river vividly before our mental vision. Once more we saw Mons Serratus with its jagged, fantastic peaks: lived through our haunted night in the Hospederia; again Salvador the monk and his wonderful music took possession of our spirit and Serratus itself appeared enveloped in harmony and romance. We were glad not to pass through the station, where possibly Sebastian would have been on the watch for passengers; and we should have left a heartbroken expression behind us at the very thought of our not staying a couple of days to see Manresa under sunshine.

The day was wearing on to evening as we approached Tarragona with its matchless coast scene. The blue waters of the Mediterranean stretched far and wide, and the harbour reposed upon them like a sleeping crescent. As the sun dipped in the west, the waters flashed out its declining rays, reflected the gorgeous colouring of the sky. The train landed us in the lower town. We had to reach the upper town, and the rickety old omnibus rolled and struggled up the steep streets, finally depositing us at the Fonda de Paris.

We found the inn quite civilised. The landlord was half Italian and spoke several languages. On the first night of our arrival the cook must have been in a very amiable mood, for he sent up an excellent dinner. But to H. C.'s sorrow and surprise the after dinners were a lamentable falling off. The cook had been suddenly crossed in love, received notice to quit, or his art failed him: everything was below par. On the evening of our arrival, the evil had not fallen.

The hotel, like many of the Spanish inns was large and rambling. Our landlord conducted us to his best rooms, which faced the road, and from the balcony the scene was enchanting. Before us was an old Roman tower. To our right, far down, 700 feet below our present level, we caught sight of the sleeping Mediterranean.

It was not quite so pleasant to find ourselves surrounded by the military element; barracks to right and left of us; sentries in slippers patrolling up and down; raw recruits, looking as little like soldiers as anything to be conceived; constant snatches of bugle calling, which seemed to end at midnight and begin again at four in the morning. So far, all was unrest. But we soon found that the charms of Tarragona soared far above all small and secondary considerations.

Down the long passage behind our rooms, we came to the garden of the hotel. It was after dinner, and pale twilight reigned. In the centre of the garden a splendid spreading palm outlined itself against



EAST END, SHOWING NORMAN APSE.

the evening sky, in which shone a large, liquid, solitary star. The garden was surrounded by a white wall, and the scene was quite eastern. Far down was the wonderful coast-line and crescent harbour.

Of late we had had only rivers, and this broad expanse of sea brought new life to the spirit.

Returning indoors we found the inn haunted, but not by the spirits of the dead.

The ghost was unmistakably flesh and blood. The first time we caught sight of him—it was a masculine ghost, therefore doubly uninteresting—he was cautiously putting his head into our rooms and taking a look round. The said rooms were raised above the rest on that floor by steps that led to our own quarters only. Thus the ghost was clearly trespassing. He neither looked confused nor apologised as he took his slow departure. All his time seemed spent in prowling about the passages in a spirit of curiosity or unrest. Often we found him on our premises on suddenly coming in; and once or twice when quietly writing, on looking up we were startled by an evil-looking countenance intruding itself at the half open door, and as quickly withdrawing on finding the room occupied.

We never discovered the mystery. Whether the ghost was a little out of its mind; whether it was its peculiar way of taking exercise; or whether it suffered from kleptomania, and had a passion for collecting sticks and umbrellas: nothing of this was ever learned. We only knew that the ghost looked like a dissenting parson of the tenth degree; that it dressed in sable garments and went about with a pale face, and large black eyes that seemed to glow with hidden fire suggestive of madness, and long straight black hair plastered down each side of its face: a curiously unpleasant object to encounter at every trick and turn of the gloomy corridors.

Tarragona possesses two distinct elements, both in an eminent degree. The town, especially the lower town, is mean and commonplace. Ascending beyond a certain point, you come upon everything refined and beautiful. It stands on a hill which gradually rises to some seven or eight hundred feet above the sea-level. At the highest point of all is its mediæval cathedral, surpassing most of the cathedrals of Spain or elsewhere: one of those wonders of architecture that visit us in our dreams, but are seldom found in real life. It does not, however, stand out far and wide in magnificent outlines, like Manresa or Lerida. Only a close inspection reveals its charms.

The upper town is surrounded by walls ancient and imposing. Within their boundaries are many Roman and Christian remains, such as few places still possess, making of Tarragona a dream of the past, crowded with interest. Outside the walls the views are splendid and extensive. Looking towards the ever-changing sea, the coast-line is magnificent. Point after point juts out; hill after hill rises towards the East. Far down at one's feet lies the little harbour, encircling all the craft that seek its shelter: steamers from Barcelona with their daily freights; other steamers from Norway and Sweden laden with scented pine wood; a whole fleet of picturesque fishing-boats. Inland, the country is a succession of rich green pastures and sunny vine-

yards, whilst on the sloping hills afar off reposes many a town or village.

That first night we went out into the darkness, when details were lost in outlines. We passed the barracks where bugling seemed to be in full play. A narrow street to the right led to a short flight of steps above which rose the west front of the cathedral. As far as we could see, the porches were deep and beautiful. But it was the south and east sides that presented such marvellous outlines. Even the darkness could not hide their beauty. And presently when the moon rose, and her pale silvery light shone full upon the grey walls and gleamed upon the Gothic windows and ancient tower, it turned to a dream-fabric.

The night was intensely still; not a sound could be heard, not a soul was visible. Our footsteps alone woke the echoes as we walked to and fro before that moonlight vision, and felt unable to leave it.

The cathedral clock struck eleven. As the last stroke vibrated upon the air, we saw a shadowy form approaching. It was not yet the ghostly hour, therefore it must be flesh and blood, to be boldly challenged. Was the mysterious being that haunted our corridors prowling these precincts in search of relics? No; as the form approached we saw that it was short and slender; almost diaphanous, almost deformed. The head seemed enormous in comparison with the body; legs and arms were unusually long. Yet even in the moonlight we noticed that something pale and spiritual about the face redeemed its ugliness. We thought of Quilp, of Quasimodo, all the grotesques we had ever heard of, but he only resembled these at a distance; we soon found that he was far better than they.

This Apparition was followed by a lean, lanky youth who seemed to be shod in india-rubber, so silent were his footsteps. He towered above Quasimodo, whom he followed as a shadow follows its substance. We happened to be standing near a small gate in the south railings, and up to this gate came Quasimodo, inserted a magic key into the lock, and swung it open. What did it mean? Were they, this moonlight night, going into the interior? What a weird experience; what an opportunity not to be lost. The Apparition must be won over.

"Are you entering the cathedral?" we asked as they passed in and half closed the gate. To our relief a very earthly voice responded in matter-of-fact tones.

"Yes," it replied. "Do you want to enter also?"

It needed no further invitation. We passed through, and the gate was closed and locked. As we heard the sharp click, and Quasimodo pocketed the key, we felt ourselves prisoners. All the possible and impossible stories we had ever heard of midnight murders and mysterious disappearances flashed through the brain. But the die was cast and we must follow. The enigma which even at the instant puzzled us, was the motive for this midnight visit. We could think of none.

We stood for a moment in the space between the railings and the building. Repairs were going on ; it had been turned into a stone-mason's yard. The cold moonlight fell upon heavy blocks of marble lying about. There was an erection that looked for all the world like a gibbet, and we almost expected to see a ghostly skeleton dangling from its cross-beam.

Quasimodo moved on with his shadow, and opened a small south door. He entered and we waited whilst he took a lantern from the hands of the Shadow. It was lighted in a moment and we found that it was a powerful electric lamp. Then we too passed in, and the door closed upon us. If we were to be murdered, it would not be in utter darkness. The lantern was brilliant, and threw around its ghostly lights and shadows. We are compelled to repeat the adjective, for everything was ghostly and weird.

The vast interior was lost in profoundest gloom and silence. No single light could reach the ghostly depths and spaces, but round about us the lantern lighted up the outlines of aisles and arches and pillars.

The effect was inexpressibly solemn. There seemed no limit to the space. We paced the aisles, and thought them endless. Our footsteps awoke ghostly echoes. As far as could be discerned, we were surrounded by the loveliest, most refined outlines. Gothic aisles and arches were dimly visible. And still the Shadow followed Quasimodo, and still his footsteps made no sound.

Quasimodo walked in silence for a time, evidently enjoying our own silent delight and experience. His long arms and legs, his large head, his long-drawn, backward shadow, all suggested gnome-land. He swung the lantern about as though charmed and allured by all the fantastic effects it produced.

At last we felt we must break the silence.

"Why are you here?" we said. "May we ask? It seems so strange to be walking with you in this midnight space and darkness."

"Can you not guess?" he returned. "What object could I have in coming here at this dark hour? Look."

Then we noticed for the first time that the Shadow carried a music book, and the enigma was solved. Quasimodo had come to practise.

"But what a strange hour," we exclaimed. "You turn night into day. Is it that these ghostly shadows inspire you as nothing else can?"

"No," replied Quasimodo; "I have no inspiration. I possess the souls of others, I have no soul of my own. It is given to me to interpret the thoughts of all musicians with a wonderful interpretation, but not a single thought of my own do I possess. Not a single line can I extemporize. I am like a man to whom has been given all the feelings, all the aspirations, all the fire of the poet, and from whom is withheld the gift of language. But I am content. All the



thoughts of the great masters are mine, my very own, and I am grateful for the power. It is a gift. As a rule I need no music. All the thoughts are stamped on my brain in undying characters. You shall hear. This is a book of Bach's Fugues that I scarcely



SOUTH-WEST EXTERIOR.

need ; and this quiet and devoted creature is my organ-blower. He is deaf and dumb, which explains his silence."

"But you have not told us your reason for turning night into day," we remarked. "Everything about you is so weird and un-

usual that we cannot help our curiosity. You must not think it impertinence."

"True," replied Quasimodo. "It must indeed seem strange to you that I come here now, yet the reason is simple enough. I teach all day long, for I have to work for my living. Yet I cannot live without occasionally pouring out my soul in music; and as I have no time but the night, I come here now rather than not at all. I was not here last night or the night before; I shall not be here again any night this week. I have to work not only for my own living, but for a wife and two lovely children. You start. You wonder that any woman could have married this grotesque creature—much more a beautiful woman. You do not wonder more than I do. I tell my wife that she married me for my music, not for myself. The music charmed and bewitched her; threw a glamour over her eyes and judgment and taste. She laughs in reply. We have been married twelve years now, and she still seems the happiest of women, the most devoted of wives. Heaven be praised, there is nothing grotesque in our lovely children. They might have come from paradise. But now I will go and play, and you shall listen. You have chosen to enter here, and here you must remain until I let you out again. I will leave you my lantern and you may wander where you will."

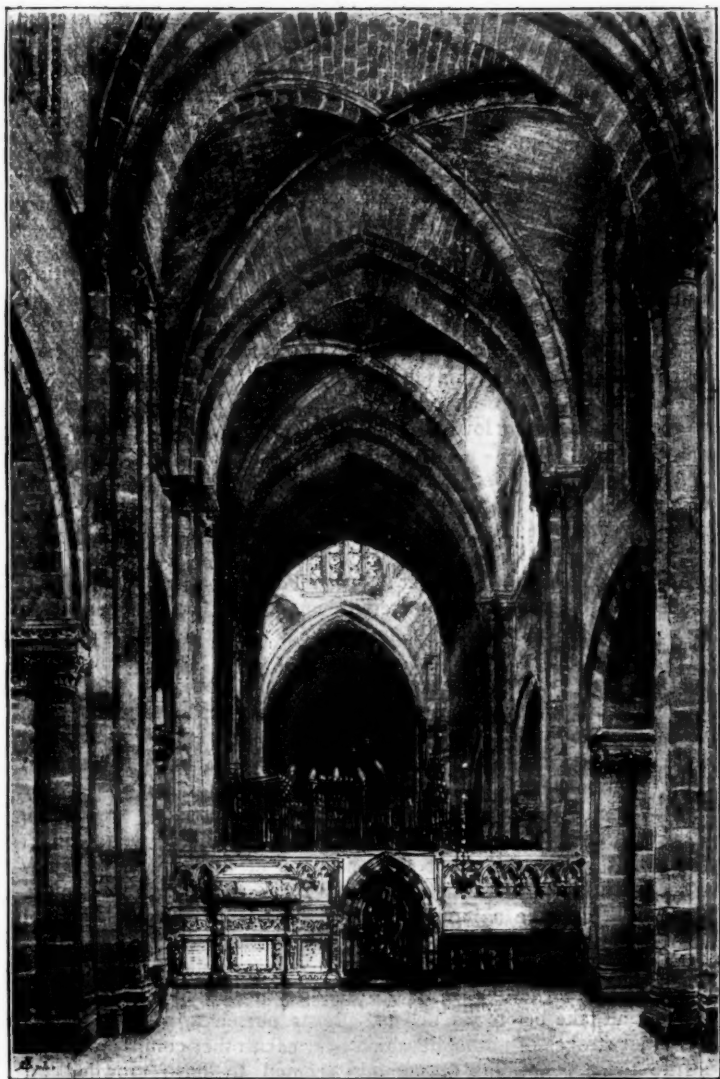
With that he placed his lamp in our hand, and lighting a small wax candle which he produced from his pocket, departed down the long, dark, solemn, solitary aisle, followed by his silent shadow. We soon lost them in the gloom, and nothing but the distant sound of Quasimodo's footsteps told us we were not alone. Even this sound ceased, and for a time absolute silence reigned.

Presently a far-off glimmer showed where the organ loft was placed. Quasimodo had lighted the candles and taken his seat. We turned off the light of our lantern. The moonlight was playing upon the windows, and the pale rays streamed across the aisles upon pillars and arches. Never was a more weird, a more telling and effective scene.

We sat down on the steps of one of the chapels. The whole ghostly building, shrouded in gloom and mystery and moonbeams, stood before us, in all its solidity, all its grandeur and magnificence. Intense silence reigned. We could hear the beating of our hearts, feel the quickening of our pulses.

Then through the silence there stole the softest, sweetest sounds. Quasimodo was interpreting the thoughts of others. He had chosen that soothing, flowing, exquisite *Träumerei* of Schumann's: and rendered it as never rendered before. The whole melody was hushed and subdued. Nothing seemed to rise above a whisper. All the aisles and arches were full of exquisite vibrations. Quasimodo appeared to linger upon every note as though he loved it and could not part with it. One note melted into another. The sense of rhythm was absolutely satisfied.

We listened spellbound to the end. Never had the simple, beautiful



INTERIOR OF CATHEDRAL: LOOKING EASTWARD.

melody so held all our senses captive. It ceased, and again for a moment the whole vast interior was steeped in profound silence; the moonbeams streaming their pale light through the windows possessed the building.

Then a different spirit held Quasimodo. Our dream changed. Louder stops were pulled out, and he plunged into a vigorous fugue of Bach's. Again we had never heard it so played. Every note fell clear and distinct. The music seemed gifted with words suggesting wild thoughts and emotions. What Quasimodo had said was true. The souls of the dead-and-gone masters possessed him. He was their true interpreter. The fugue came to an end. Again a moment's silence and again a change in our dream.

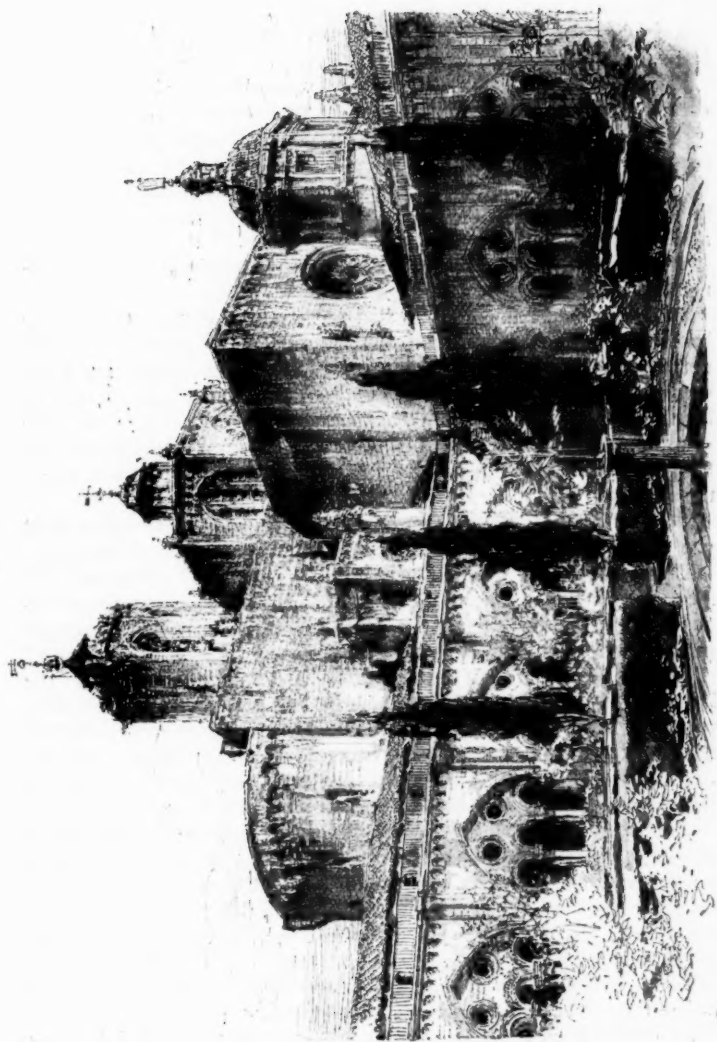
This time it was Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata. More fitting time and place could never have existed. The pulses thrilled as we listened. Never had music seemed so perfect. Beethoven himself would have declared the rendering beyond his own conception. Quasimodo was a magician. His body might be grotesque, his mind was angelic. Be his wife never so beautiful, he never so grotesque, she could not fail to love that soul and spirit. He was worthy, and she was wise.

Again the soft sweet strains went trolling through aisles and arches, all their exquisite melancholy cadence fully rendered. And presently it changed to the louder, more passionate strains, suggestive more of storm and tempest than serene moonlight. It ceased; and one thing gave place to another; Quasimodo's moods seemed as wild and eccentric as they were uncertain but ever charming. For two whole hours he kept us spell-bound. We never thought of the night; of the passing of time; of the necessity for rest. We were in a new world. The moonbeams travelled onwards and downwards.

Midnight struck. Twelve slow strokes fell upon the air. The ghosts came out to listen; it was their hour. We were persuaded that the aisles and arches were full of them. We saw faint shadows thrown upon the moonbeams, as they passed to and fro. It is useless to say ghosts do not throw shadows: that night we distinctly saw them. Aisles and arches seemed full of sighs and subdued sobbings. H. C. declared it was nothing but the vibrations of the organ: we knew better. The ghosts were sighing and sobbing at the wonderful music. There could not be a more ghostly time or place; and they would not often have such harmonies to listen to.

The moments passed. One o'clock struck; solitary, melancholy sound; more suggestive of ghosts and death and the long journey we must all take before we become ghosts ourselves, than the twelve drawn-out strokes of midnight which bear each other company.

Into those two hours Quasimodo seemed to have crowded an eternity of music. Every vein, from the mournful to the triumphant, from the faintest whisper to a crashing torrent, possessed him. He passed into Wagner, and the sweetest strains from Lohengrin, the



CLOISTERS.

most impassioned from Tannhäuser, thrilled the darkness. He fell into Handel's airs, and with the aid of a wonderful *voix céleste*, that loveliest of melodies, *I know that my Redeemer liveth*, stole through the aisles with such pathos that our eyes wept involuntary tears, and the Divine drama of nearly nineteen centuries ago passed in detail before our mental vision.

Quasimodo seemed to have power to raise emotion, to play upon every nerve, and he appeared to delight in using that power.

He went on in all his varying moods, until again there came a pause, and once more Schumann's *Träumerei* in soft, sweet strains went stealing through the aisles. With this he had begun, with this he would end: as one who had taken a long journey, and would bring us back safely to our haven.

A journey indeed; a flight into fairy-land; spiritual realms where nothing earthly can enter.

It came to an end; and we had to return to earth. Quasimodo had poured out his soul and was satisfied. No wonder he could not live without it. Such a gift must find expression, or the spirit would die. The lights went out in the distant organ-loft, and by the help of his taper Quasimodo groped his way down the winding stairs, followed by his silent shadow. We turned on the lamp, and its light guided him to us. He sat down beside us on the steps.

"Well," he said, "have you enjoyed my music? Have they kept you spell-bound, all the thoughts of the great masters of the past? Did you think there was so much in them? Have I given you new ideas, revealed unsuspected beauties? Have the hours passed as moments? Oh, the divine gift of melody to man, which brings us nearest to heaven! How could we live without it?"

He had played himself into rapture. He was intoxicated with the influence of all the melody to which he had given such amazing expression. It was a language more powerful than words, more beautiful than poetry, more soul-satisfying than love itself. What a strange contradiction had nature here been guilty of—this grotesque, almost deformed exterior united to such loveliness of mind and spirit.

But time was passing. We could not indulge for ever in these dreams, perfect though they were. The change in the moonbeams warned us that the night was growing old. The ghosts would soon depart to the land of shadows. Yet the building was so weird and mysterious, the outlines were so marvellous, that it was difficult to break the spell. It had to be done. The grey dawn must not find us here. All our romance, all our charm of music would evaporate before the cold creeping upwards of daybreak.

So we rose from the steps, and Quasimodo rose too, and his Shadow took up his customary position.

We still held the lamp. As we went down the long aisles we flashed it to and fro. Lights and shadows mingled with the moonbeams, and



all the fantastic forms we awoke were only so many reflections from ghostland. At the south doorway Quasimodo inserted the key; the door opened and we passed out into the night.

The moon and the stars had travelled far; the sky itself seemed full of all the music and melody we had listened to. Quasimodo locked up the door and joined us, followed by his shadow. But once outside the iron gate the shadow bade him good-night by a silent gesture in which we were included, and rapidly and silently, like the Shadow he was, glided away and was soon lost to sight.

We stood looking at the cathedral, all its wonderful outlines showing up clearly in the pale pure moonlight. Silence and solitude now reigned within and without. Then we turned away, and Quasimodo accompanied us as far as the bottom of the steps. There he bade us farewell and we never met him again.

The incident passed almost as a dream. We sometimes ask ourselves whether Quasimodo was really flesh and blood, or an angel that for a short time had visited the earth in the form of man. But he was no spirit. We watched his quaint form as he went down the narrow street, flashing his light. Towards the end he looked back and turned the lamp full upon us, as though by way of final benediction. Another turn and he had passed out of sight.

The street had not the glimmer of a light or the ghost of a sound. Our own broad thoroughfare was in darkness. The Roman tower seemed wrapped in the silence and mystery of the centuries. From the end of the road we looked over the cliff at the sea sleeping in all its expanse, bathed in moonlight. In the harbour one caught the outlines of the vessels, and from one of them came the bark of a dog baying at the moon. It was one of those perfect nights, still, clear and calm, only to be found in these latitudes.

The cathedral clock had long struck two, when we finally turned towards the hotel. What if the night-porter failed us, as he had failed in Lerida? But he was more cunning. He was not there, indeed, but he had left the door ajar, and the gas slightly turned on at the foot of the staircase.

We made all fast and sought our rooms. With open windows, even from here we could hear the faint plash and beating of the tide upon the shore—the slight ebb-and-flow movement of this tideless sea. Our dreams that night were haunted by Quasimodo. We had left the world for realms where no limit was, and divine harmonies for ever filled the air. Some hours later this harmony suddenly resolved itself into a bugle call, and we woke to a new day.

Only the broad daylight could discover all the charms of Tarragona: the beauty of its situation, the extent of its ancient remains. The very perfect walls, fine in tone, bore distinct Roman traces. Below them, on a level with the shore were other traces of a Roman amphitheatre. There were also Cyclopean remains, dating from prehistoric times. Tarragona was a great Roman station when the brothers

Publius and Cneidos Scipio occupied it. Augustus raised it to the dignity of a capital : and twenty-six years B.C., after his Cantabrian campaign, he here issued his decree closing the Temple of Janus—open until then for seven hundred years.

Tarragona was already a large and flourishing city with over a million inhabitants. It was rich and highly favoured, and its chief people considered themselves lords of the world. Many temples were erected, one of them to the honour of Augustus, making him a god whilst still living. There are fragments in the cloister museum said to have belonged to this temple, which was repaired by Adrian.

On our upward way near the Roman tower we passed the still wonderful house of Pontius Pilate, who was claimed by the Tarragonese as a fellow-townsmen. It is said to have been also the palace of Augustus, and the lower portion bears traces of an existence before the Romans. To-day it is a prison, and as some of its walls are twenty feet thick the prisoners have few chances of escape. Few spots in Spain are more interesting, or so completely carry you back to the early centuries. On its south wall is an entrance to a short passage leading to the Cyclopean doorway, communicating by a subterranean passage with the comparatively modern Puerta del Rosario. To the east of this gateway we soon reach the ramparts, just above a ruined fort, and near the modern battery of San Fernando. From these ramparts you have the finest view of Tarragona and its surroundings.

On one side stretch far and wide the blue waters of the Mediterranean. Lateen-rigged feluccas, with white sails set, are wafted to and fro by the gentle breeze. Life on board seems a paradise of luxurious ease and indolence. Nothing marks the passing hours but the slow progress of the sun. The sky is intensely blue as the sea. The air seems full of light. You are dazzled by so much brilliance. Distant objects stand out in clear detail. The wide undulating plain stretches far away to the left, broken by towns and villages, the famous castle of Altafulla in the distance. Below the town lies the aqueduct, one of the most perfect Roman remains in Spain.

At our feet are the city walls, enclosing all the wonderful antiquities, and above the picturesque roofs of the houses rise the outlines of the matchless cathedral.

To this same cathedral we made our way this morning passing through the market-place, lively with stalls, buyers and sellers; Spanish men and women picturesque in their national costumes : a modern human picture side by side with outlines of the highest antiquity.

Passing through an archway we found ourselves in the cathedral square, dazzled by the splendour of the vision. Here the market had overflowed, and the market-women, full of life and colouring and animation, sat in front of their fruit and flower-stalls. One and all

tempted us to buy, and rare were the wares they sold. Again the new and the ancient blended together; for beyond the women rose those marvellous and matchless outlines, sharply pencilled against the brilliant blue sky. The magnificent contrast of colouring almost bewildered one. Everything was in strong light and shadow.

Our strange experience of last night was still full upon us. We



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had hardly recovered from the dream state into which the marvellous music of Quasimodo had plunged us with mesmeric influence.

The beauty of the night, the pure pale moonlight effect, had not prepared us for the splendours of to-day. So effective, lovely, and diversified a cathedral: the most remarkable exterior we had yet found in Spain. The whole square with its surrounding houses is a dream. The church dates from the eleventh century. Above the

round apse of the choir at the east end—probably the oldest part of the building—rose outline upon outline, all bearing the refining mark of age. Much of it appeared never to have been touched or restored. On the south side was a tower, of which the lower part was Romanesque, the remainder fourteenth century and octagonal. Apart from the east end most of the church is transitional. The roofs are covered with pantiles, but they are not the original covering, and are not quite in harmony with the rest of the work.

The west doorways are very fine. Those that open to the aisles are of the earliest date; the central and more important is fourteenth century, deeply recessed, with a massive buttress on each side. This doorway rises to a triangle, above which are many statues of the apostles in Gothic niches. Above the Romanesque side doors are rose windows with rare and delicate tracery, and the south door has a finely carved relief of the Entry into Jerusalem.

The internal effect was most impressive. Few cathedrals are more solidly built, yet few have a greater display of ornamentation. The columns were splendid, all their capitals richly and magnificently carved, redeeming the somewhat stern severity of the pure transition work. The piers are very massive, and the eye is at once arrested by the early-pointed clerestory and unusually large bays. The view of the interior of the transept, above which rises the octagonal lantern with its narrow pointed lights is especially striking. A little of the coloured glass is very brilliant, and sixteenth century, but the greater part is modern. The chancel is pure Romanesque, the chapels are chiefly fourteenth century. In the baptistery the font is a Roman sarcophagus found in the palace of Augustus.

But the cloisters are the gem of the cathedral. Here again was an architectural dream, grand in design, of noblest proportions. They consist of six splendid bays on each side, each bay enclosing three round arches. These are divided by coupled shafts of white marble, decorated with dog-tooth mouldings. Above them two large circles are pierced in the wall, some retaining the original interlacing work of extreme beauty and delicacy, and of Moorish origin.

Many of the capitals are quaintly carved, with humorous subjects: one of them, for instance, representing a procession of rats carrying a cat to her burial. Grimalkin shams death, and the foolish rats have neglected to bind her. Presently the tables are turned. The cat comes to life, springs upon the rats and devours them.

The verger was very proud of these capitals, and of the whole cathedral: full of energy and enthusiasm, understanding every detail, delighting to linger at every turn. He seemed intelligent and educated, and declared he was only happy when gazing upon his beloved aisles and arches. He begged us to give him an English lesson in architectural terms, which he soon mastered. Dressed in his purple gown, he looked as imposing as any of the priests in their vestments, and more intelligent than many.

Seeing our enthusiasm, delighted to find it equal to his own, the verger left the cloister doorway unlocked, so that we might enter at any moment. This was a great concession, for in Spain they keep their cloisters under constant lock and key—probably for the sake of the fee demanded for the opening. Our sacristan was far above such mercenary considerations. He talked and exhibited out of pure love for his work.

"The Cathedral is my hobby and my happiness," he said. "I would rather die than be separated from it. I know the history of every stone and every pillar by heart, and I could sketch every minute detail from memory. In these glorious aisles, these matchless cloisters I feel in paradise. I love to come here when the church is closed and sit and study and contemplate. If I had been born in a better sphere I should have become an architect. All these outlines appeal to my soul, just as music appeals to *Señor Ancora*."

"Is he your wonderful midnight player?" we asked.

"*Sí, señor*. Do you mean to say that you have heard him?"

"We were with him last night, and spent more than two hours in the cathedral listening to his wonderful music."

"I can hardly believe it," cried the verger. "Never will he admit any one to his midnight vagaries, as I call them. I do not know how you won him over to admit you. But he seems to me to guess things by intuition. Something must have told him that you had a soul for music, and he could not find it in his heart to refuse you."

"A curious, grotesque man, who almost gives one the impression of being supernatural," we observed.

"We all think he is bordering upon it," returned the sacristan; "half man, half angel. Curious and almost deformed as he looks, he is the envy and admiration of the whole town, and has the most beautiful wife, the loveliest children. He came here twenty years ago, a pale, slight, ethereal youth of eighteen, looking as though he had dropped from the stars, or some far-off paradise. People still wonder whether he did so or not.—Look, *señor*," pointing upwards. "Did you ever see such outlines, such a vision of beauty? Is it not the very spot for such a soul as *Señor Ancora's*?"

We were standing in the cloister garden, where orange trees and graceful shrubs grew in wild profusion and exquisite contrast. In the centre of the garden a fountain threw up its spray and plashed with cool musical sound. Surrounding us were the wonderful cloister bays with their round arches resting on the white marble columns, all enclosed in an outer pointed arch. Above them rose the cathedral against the deep blue sky. Outline above outline; Romanesque and Gothic: the lantern crowning the whole. The shadows of the marble columns upon the ancient cloister pavement were sharply defined.

"No wonder you love it," we said to the sacristan. "Rather we wonder you do not apply for permission to live in the chapter-house, and take up your abode here altogether."

"Ah, señor," smiled the sacristan, "like Señor Ancora, I also have my domestic ties: a wife and children to think about. But, alas, my wife has no soul, and cannot even understand my love for the cathedral. That indeed ought to have been my wife, and I ought never to have married commonplace flesh and blood. Here I have been day after day for thirty years, in constant attendance, and I grow to love it more and more, and daily discover fresh beauties. There are no cloisters in the world like these. There is no vision on earth to be compared with this, as we stand here, and look upwards and around. None."

As we stood listening to the sacristan's enthusiasm, a pale, refined, grave-looking ecclesiastic passed out of the beautiful doorway leading from the church, and with silent footstep walked through the cloister to the chapter-house. He was dressed in a violet silk robe or cassock, over which was a white lace alb. As he went by he bowed to us with great gravity, but said not a word. There was a sorrowful, subdued look upon the clear-cut features, the large grey eyes.

"That is one of our canons," said the sacristan, after he had disappeared into the chapter-house; "the one I like best. He too loves this wonderful building."

"He is sad-looking," we observed. "One could almost imagine he had mistaken his vocation, or had had some great sorrow in life."

"You are right, señor," replied the sacristan; "right on both counts. He was a man of noble family, never intended for the church. Engaged to a lovely lady to whom he was devoted, she died the very day before they were to have been married. He remained inconsolable, and at last took orders. At one time he had an idea of becoming a monk; but he is very clever, and was persuaded to take up a more active life in the church. As you saw him now, so he always is; grave, subdued, gentle and kindly. No one goes to him for help in vain. Here he is venerated."

We felt drawn towards this refined ecclesiastic, and wished to know him, but no opportunity presented itself. The cloisters seemed to gain an added charm by his presence. His dress and appearance exactly suited them, and gave them an additional touch of picturesque romance and human interest. The whole scene inspired us with a strange affection for Tarragona, and there are few places in Spain we would sooner revisit.

A little later, when we were going round the precincts, they seemed suddenly to swarm with a small army of boys. These were turning out of the new seminary, a mongrel building designed on old lines, therefore neither one thing nor the other; neither fish, flesh, fowl, nor good red herring—if the comparison is permissible to bricks and mortar. We entered, and turning to the left, found ourselves in modern cloisters echoing with the shouts of boys at their play.



But the cloisters were specially attractive from the fact that they enclosed a small, very ancient church—the church of San Pablo—a perfect gem in its way ; with a square-headed doorway and Romanesque capitals, and a small turret holding the bell, above which was a thin iron cross. It was a lovely building, and lost in surprised admiration



AN OLD NOOK IN TARRAGONA.

we stood gazing. The boys who came round us without the least shyness could not understand it.

"What do you see in it?" asked one of them. "We should like to knock the old barrack down. It takes up our play room. A wretched old building, neither use nor ornament. But we can't get

rid of it. It won't burn; it is so solid that we can't demolish it; and we daren't use dynamite. We have to put up with it."

"And you would rather put up with the grapes and the oranges in the market-place?" we suggested.

"We should like to put them *down*, señor. Only try us."

Having invited the challenge, it had to be accepted: and the whole troupe tore off with one consent to drive hard bargains with the fruit-women. One boy, however, remained behind; a fair, thoughtful lad of about fifteen, with large dreamy brown eyes.

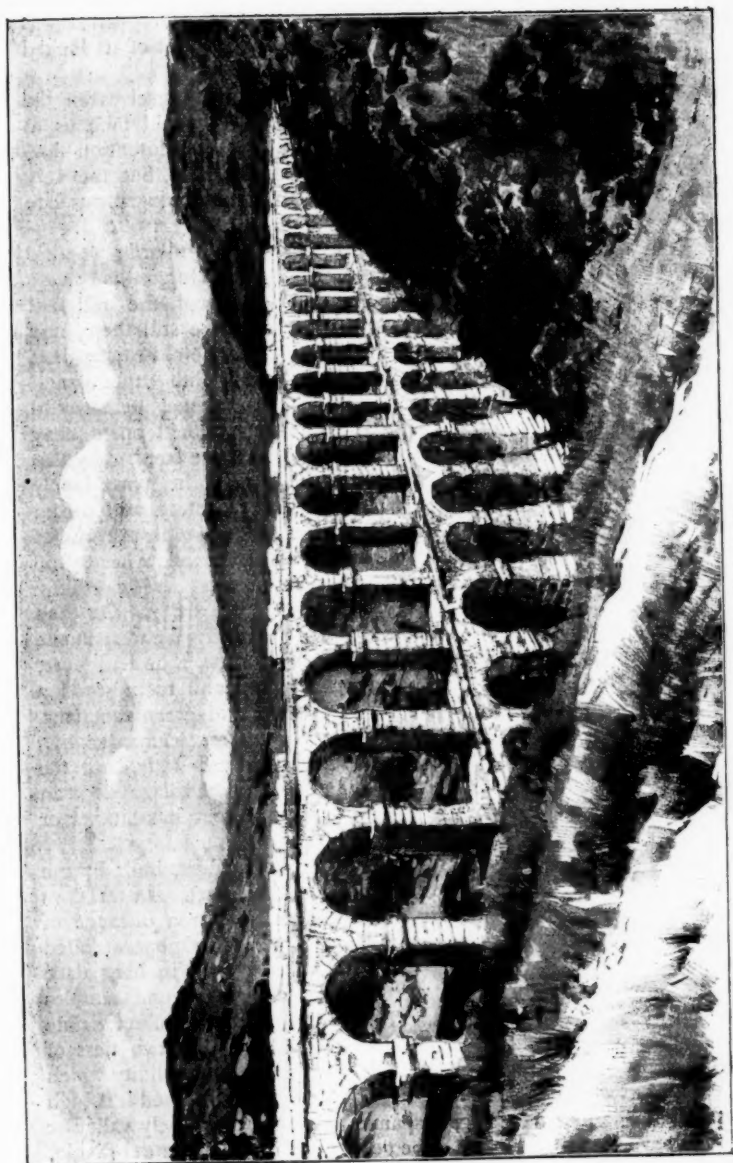
"Why don't you join them, and take your share of the spoil?" we asked him.

"Señor, I would rather study this old chapel than eat all the grapes in Catalonia," he replied. "My father is the sacristan of the cathedral. He loves old buildings too, but not as I do, I think. I have made up my mind to be an architect, and when I can do as I like I will build great churches on such models as these, like the mighty men of old." So the father's love had descended to the son, and in the latter may possibly some day bear good fruit. The boy looked a genius. We turned away and the boy turned with us. "Let me show you my favourite spot, señor," he said; and forthwith led us to a short street of steps, something like the streets of Gerona, ending in a lovely old arched passage, through which one caught a glimpse of ancient houses beyond. Above the archway rose a wonderful old house with an ajimez window of rare beauty, and other Gothic windows with latticed panes and deep mouldings. Then came the overhanging roof covered with pantiles. The tone was perfect. Next to this was a small church with a Norman doorway, crowned by a graceful belfry in which a solitary bell was swung. If not the most ancient, it was certainly the most picturesque bit in all Tarragona.

"And you really love it?" we asked this singular boy.

"With all my heart," he answered. "I often come here with my books and do my lessons sitting on that old staircase that you see on the left. The house is empty, and no one interferes with me. But I must be off home. Adieu, señor." And away he went, none the less happy for sundry coins that rattled musically in his pocket, that would probably be spent in something more lasting than fruit and flowers, whilst we went back to our beloved precincts and studied the outlines of the middle ages.

One sunny afternoon we hired a conveyance and started for the Roman Aqueduct. It was the only conveyance of the kind to be found in Tarragona. The owner, who drove us himself, called it a victoria, and seemed very proud of it. Large and heavy, it might have dated from the days of the Cæsars. Its proper place undoubtedly was the Museum of Roman Antiquities, to which we had just paid a visit; and so perhaps there was something apropos in the



ROMAN AQUEDUCT.

idea of its conveying us to a Roman aqueduct. Our driver was dressed in a smock frock, and in the high seat in front of us looked perched up like a lighthouse upon a rock.

We rattled through the streets, and soon found ourselves on the broad white road that in time, if we persevered would take us to Lerida the chivalrous and the true. Not the least intention had we of paying that interesting old town a second visit, but the very fact of knowing that our faces were set that way, brought our late experiences vividly before us.

We wondered how it fared with our much-tried landlord; whether the waiter was yet out of hospital, and he and the Gorgon had made up their differences or had agreed to differ. Though the well had been dragged, it was possible that the skeletons were still there, and perhaps by now had risen to the surface to refute the old saying that dead men tell no tales. We thought of our polite captain, and almost wished we might come across him in Tarragona. He would be sure to know our interesting old canon, and would open many doors to us. Above all we wondered how Alphonse fared. By this time his wife would be resting in her grave; and he, poor, lonely wayfarer, would haunt the sad precincts of the cemetery, and dream of his early days and of walking through the world with the wife of his youth. No doubt he was right and would soon follow her to the Land o' the Leal, and hail the hour of his release.

But all this had nothing to do with our present journey. On each side of the road we found a rich undulating country. We were in the neighbourhood of vineyards, and the wine, when it can be had pure, is some of the best that Spain produces. Here and there stood a picturesque farm-house, with white-washed walls and green venetians, and heaps of yellow pumpkins and strings of red capsicums dangling from the balconies—the usual thing in Spain and Italy, and the countries of the South. On a hillside, an occasional village slept in the sunshine; a quiet little place, apparently without inhabitants or reason for existence.

Presently we caught sight of the wonderful aqueduct, built by the Romans so many centuries ago, yet still almost perfect. In the days of the ancients it brought the water to the city for a distance of twenty miles. Those were the days when the Tarragonese called themselves lords of the earth; when Augustus reigned in his palace and the amphitheatre was the scene of wild sports, and temples existed to all the heathen gods. The portion of the aqueduct visible from the road, was, as it were, a gigantic bridge with two tiers of arches. It had all the tone of the centuries, all the solidity which had kept it standing firm as a rock. Nearly one hundred feet high and eight hundred feet long, it spanned a green and lonely valley or ravine covered with heather. The people call it *El puente del diablo*, and may be forgiven for thinking that human hands alone could not have produced such a work.

We went to the topmost height and walked over the giddy stoneway to the very centre. There we sat down and felt ourselves masters of the world. Wild-flowers grew in the cracks and crevices, and ferns and fronds, and H. C. stretched over the yawning gulf for one almost out of reach, until we gave him up for lost and began to compose his epitaph. But he plucked his flower, and after looking at it with a sort of tender reverence, placed it carefully in his pocket-book.

"Who is that for?" we asked him, for there was no mistaking his soft expression.

"The fair Castello," replied he. "That exquisite vision that we saw in the opera house at Gerona. The landlord gave me her full name and address before we left. I am thinking of proposing to her. Her presence haunts me still."

We knew how much this was worth; how long it would last.

"You would bestow it more worthily on Rosalie," we said. "There are many fair Castellos in the world—there can be only one Rosalie."

"Do you think so?" replied this whirligig heart. "Certainly Rosalie's eyes were matchless; I tremble when I think of them. And then we got to know her, which is an advantage. After all it shall go to Rosalie. The fair Castello might have a temper: there's no knowing."

We were undoubtedly in a situation favourable to romance. The scene was magnificent. Surrounding us was a wide stretch of undulating country. The land was rich and cultivated; towns and villages reposed on the hill-sides. Far off to the right, the smoke of busy Valls ascended, and through the gentle haze we traced the outlines of its fine old church. Following the long white road before us, the eye at length rested on the blue smoke of quarrelsome and disaffected Reus, which prospers in spite of its Republican tendencies. Here more distinctly we traced the fine tower of the old church of San Pedro, in which Fortuny the painter lies buried. Distant hills bounded the horizon, shutting out the world beyond.

But there was no more interesting monument than the aqueduct on which we were perched. Its rich tone contrasted wonderfully with the subdued green of the ravine, the deep shades of the heather, so full of charm and repose to the eye tired with wandering over the glaring country and straining after distant outlines. We stayed long, enjoying our breezy elevation; going back in imagination to the early centuries of mighty deeds: those Romans who were in truth masters of the world. At last, feeling that our driver's patience was probably exhausted, and treading carefully over the granite passage of the viaduct, we made our way to the prosy level of mankind.

The driver had drawn under the shade of some trees, and was holding a levée. Half-a-dozen other drivers were grouped round him, and the bullock-carts with their patient animals were waiting their pleasure, one behind another. They were all laying down the law

with any amount of gesture and loud tones ; all more or less angry, each convinced that he was in the right.

Our coachman, as owner of a superior conveyance and a man of substance, was evidently acting as a sort of judge or umpire, and just as we came up was delivering his weighty opinion. But it appeared to be the case of the old fable again, and in trying to propitiate all he pleased none. A pitched battle seemed averted by our opportune arrival, which put an end to the discussion. As strangers and foreigners were objects of interest, we had to run the gauntlet of their scrutiny. But they were civil ; and their curiosity satisfied, they mounted their heavy waggons and set off down the road towards Reus at break-neck speed, raising more dust and noise than a hundred pieces of artillery.

Fortunately we were going the other way. As the driver mounted his box he shrugged his shoulders.

"It is always the same," he observed. "These men of Reus are the most revolutionary, the most disaffected in all Catalonia. They always have a grievance. Whatever is, is wrong. If it isn't political, it's social. If it's not taxes, it's the price of wheat. Their life is one perpetual contention, and every now and then they break out into open revolt. Only the other day, an old man of Reus, a distant connection, on his death-bed declared to me that he had made all his miseries, and if he had his time to come over again, he would make the best of the world and look on the bright side of things. Just what every one ought to do. Enjoy the sunshine, and let the shadows look after themselves."

So our driver was a philosopher after all, and had more in him than we had imagined. He whipped up his horses and began his return journey up the long white road.

Making way, the outlines of Tarragona came into view, bathed in the glow of the declining sun. The effect was gorgeous ; and we fell into a dream of the centuries gone by, when the Romans marched up that very same road with their conquering armies, and overlooked the very same sea that now stretched to right and left, blue and flashing, and built them aqueducts. In this vision of the past we saw them building their mighty monuments and looking about for fresh worlds to conquer ; and we heard the famous decree of Augustus closing the Temple of Janus as a sign that peace reigned upon the earth, what time the Star of Bethlehem was about to appear in the East ; divine signal and fitting moment for the advent of the PRINCE OF PEACE.

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## ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S DAY, 1572.

"God's pity, husband! Nay, you dare not go!  
 The streets are full of carnage, and my eyes  
 See nought but flying victims, and the foe  
 That gloat upon the fallen! Shrieks and cries  
 Rise from the reeking streets—no God is there—  
 Wild oaths from wilder devils—death, despair!

"'Death to the Huguenots!' Wild curse and prayer  
 Mingle together in a mad fierce song—  
 O Heav'n! the cruel eyes, they burn and glare,  
 And hands are blood-stained——

Nay, again I'm strong,  
 'Twas but a moment's weakness ere my ear  
 Had caught your words, sweet lord, so low and clear!

"Nay, force me not away! I dare not let  
 My young arms loose their trembling passionate grasp;  
 For love is stronger than the life, and death  
 Would disunite, but to unite their clasp.  
 Love owns no gage of strength, no shock, no fear,  
 Where marriage bonds are strong and hearts sincere!"

"Queen-bride of one short day! and if 'tis so  
 God measures not our years by our faint breath;  
 Or short, or long, our life has had its flow,  
 And ebb finds us together. What is death?  
 A short sharp pain, closed eyes, a sleep—  
 Then love,  
 And life, and welcome in the Land above."

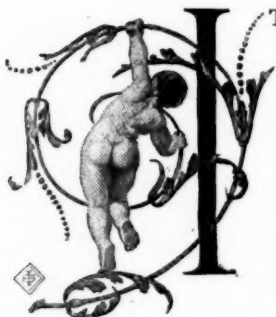
"Hark! what was that?"—loud voices at the door—  
 "Fly, Henri, fly!—A message from the king!"  
 Back rolls the tide of life so faint before,  
 And youth, and joy, and hope together sing!  
 Saved, saved! Oh, God! The glad words throb and surge  
 And marriage hymns out-riding the funeral dirge!

AGNES E. GLASE.

## THE TERRIBLE DEVOTION.

## A PROSE IDYLL.

BY THE REV. PREBENDARY VERNON, M.A., AUTHOR OF  
'THE HARVEST OF A QUIET EYE,' &c.



It came about, really, through inadvertence—through that deadly evil, want of thought. He had been early left a widower, with one only daughter, beautiful, wilful, yet of good disposition; a garden of sweets allowed, by want of training and restraining, to lapse into a wilderness. At least, so it was apparent when she grew into a woman.

It came about in that the man had himself been carelessly, irreligiously, brought up; brought up, indeed, in the slavery called, euphemistically, "free

thought." He had not been so much even as a moral man; he saw no reason why he should be; to whom was he to render account of what it pleased him to do? So there was, assuredly, no *religious* training for his daughter. She was, in great degree, let alone to do and be as she pleased. Why train or restrain nature? Let her grow free as the wild hop-bine, move as unconfinedly as the birds in the grove. Let her be a child of nature. Let her religion be the religion of humanity.

And a child of nature she was. Only, unhappily, it had, of course, not entered into his reckoning that our nature, as we have it, is a fallen nature, and that even the wild hop must be trained, restrained, or trail in the mire.

Even so was it with Brunhilda, as he had fancifully named her. From infancy she had known no check, no discipline. Her fits of temper, her selfishness, her punishable escapades, were all only laughed at, and that in her presence, by her father. He would repeat her sayings and doings, before her, to his friends, as proofs of a fine spirit. Any remonstrances, by those who foresaw, were pooh-poohed; and the child treated more as an amusing toy, than as an immortal being, whose character was being daily formed or marred by her environments. When she grew into maidenhood, she was admitted to the society of her father's acquaintance; would preside at the dinner-table, often the only lady there, and listen to the loose, sceptical talk; taking, indeed, her part in it. Life was represented as a jest,

according to the ghastly epitaph in the Abbey; nothing was worthy of reverence; as for a Hereafter, who could reckon with such an unknown quantity? "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die!" Nor were such men over-careful, in the thoughtlessness of talk, as to reverence due to the young, lest they should stain the white ignorance and purity of the soul.

And so it was that she grew up, the darling, indeed of her father; but spoilt, imperious, with no idea of yielding her will or whim on any point; no comfortable inmate truly for any man's home. And in her early womanhood this made itself apparent, even to him. Too late, he would fain have checked this thing and that in his daughter; have made her somewhat conventional, if nothing more; have laid some restraint upon the society she kept, and upon the books she read; tracing much, of that in her which made him uneasy, to her drinking in sceptical literature, and doubtful novels.

However, the very novelty of opposition, which came too late, increased her persistence in having her own way. Wilfulness became obstinacy, and the effort at even the least control became cause of resentment, and so, resenting even her father's endearments, for he doted on her no less than ever, she actually turned from himself with dislike. She brooded over her fancied injuries, and one day left the home of her childhood, alas, with a married man, one of her father's "free-thinking" guests. Why should she not? Such things had been lightly talked of in the company to which she had been accustomed.

\* \* \* \*

A year or two passed by. Great changes had taken place. *Had* taken place, at least, in the father, were about to take place in the child. She had not gone through the common experience of desertion; the sinners were still faithful to each other. No. But she lay on her death-bed.

And the father? He had been bowed down with grief at the desertion, at the aversion to him, at the fate also of his child. He had never thought how his non-training (which was really training) of her, would be likely to result.

And the "I told you so," and "you have yourself to thank," of his "comforters," certainly brought no balm to his half-broken heart. In the House of Regret, rather, of keen Remorse, that he had built for himself, he lived his lonely and despairing life. To his former acquaintance, pursuits, studies, he took an unconquerable aversion. He lived in seclusion if not in misanthropy. He had no comfort, no hope, no friend, no resource. The one thought that—

"Beating up thro' all the bitter world,  
Like fountains of sweet water in the sea,  
Kept him a living soul;"

was that some day she might want him, might need his care, might

come back to him again. But this was not to be : not on this side the grave.

*Something* was to be for him, however ; nothing less than a transformation of his whole being.

His only brother, parted from him long ago, in his boyhood days, returned from abroad. The two had been brought up under the same auspices, in the same manner. But this elder brother had early left home, an opening having been offered him in the Indian Civil Service. And many years had passed since they parted. For after some years of hopeful work, those friends of man, and messengers of God—trouble, and illness—had visited him. Great was the trouble, and long the prostration. But Eric Hardy arose from it another man. A brother (also a minister of God) had visited him, loved him, felt for him and with him, read to him, talked to him, prayed with him, and won him. Won him by the great force of love, into the yielding up his doubts to faith, and his coldness to devotion.

So that when this aged Ambassador fell asleep, ceasing from his labours, his young convert took his place, and, with his Master's message in his heart and on his lips, went forth among Native and European, conquering and to conquer. For his was the magic used by him whom he delighted to speak of as his second father, even the magic of strong belief, and unquenchable love.

And, thus furnished, he returned to England, and took up his abode with the lonely and desolate man, his brother.

It was uphill work ; it took long months. But love, the Divine love, at last prevailed. The hard heart was broken at last ; the bitter spring became sweet. The sceptic and immoral liver, became a humble and penitent believer.

But conceive the Nemesis that came upon him, now that scales had fallen from his eyes, and he saw what love can be ; infinite love ; and what purity is, and what devotion, and utter yielding of self ! And the one being in the world, on whom his whole heart had been set, was ruined ; lost, it might be, eternally, and all through his sin ! Love, very love, and purity, and selflessness, and humility, and the calm of implicit Faith—to speak of these to her would be to speak in a language unknown to her even in its alphabet, and in no wise understandable. By his neglect, and by his acts, he had himself gradually but surely killed the good in her, and nurtured the evil.

And what hope could there be now ? To what in her could he appeal ? Where was the stable place on which he could plant his lever ? All was emptiness, all chaos, in her being. And there was—and this even by his own doing—no Spirit of God moving upon the face of the waters !

What could he do ? *Nothing.* This thought was burnt in upon him night and day. And, another thought. Would the All-Just visit

on *her*, who might have been fashioned into a thing of love and purity, the sin which was his own?

So his devotions took one passionate theme for all their only feral and minor music; and in one wild wail of petition, the appeal ever went up to the Throne: David's cry to the angel with the sword of pestilence: "On me, on me, be the punishment, the recoil of the rock of ruin! she, the innocent lamb, what hath she done?"

And so he prayed and prayed, but what hope seemed there to be? He had written to her; a bitter scoff was the only reply. But he could yet pray and pray on. Was not prayer, even a penitent's prayer, omnipotent with the Almighty?

And one day a telegram arrived, bidding him come instantly, if he would see his child once again, in this world.

With more than lover's speed he sped; and himself haggard, ghastly, death-like, awaited in the room the coming to him of his quondam "friend."

"Is there *no* hope?"

"Not the slightest; she cannot live many hours."

"What is her state of mind?"

"Well, if you ask me, *devilish*, as it has been of late. If *she* had lived, I must have shot myself, or got rid of her."

"Did she ask for me?"

"Dear me, no; I think she hates you. But I was not going to bear the whole responsibility."

"Has a clergyman been sent for?"

"Hugo, *you* ask me such a question? What have you or I to do with those whom we know to be either ignorant fanatics, or conscious impostors?"

"O former words of mine! how you come back, dipped in venom of hell, to my soul! False friend, destroyer of my child, take me to her bedside! Destroyer of my child? Alas, that is her *father's* proper designation, and his alone!"

The white, beautiful face, set in the dark hair, lay on the pillow. Beauty of feature was there, beauty of expression there was none. No, "frenzy for joy, for grief, despair," had set an evil mark upon the face, and the mouth was fretful and the eyes were fierce. Even thus the face, intensely dear to him, first appeared to the father's gaze. The door opening, she, however, turned her look towards it, and it sent a dagger, as it were, to the very soul of the man as he saw recognition burn in his child's eyes. One look of hate and loathing, and she turned her head from him, and would look on him no more.

"So you have come," she muttered, "to look on your work. Oh, your child owes a debt, an eternal debt, to her father. One verse, that I have heard somewhere, seems to sum it all up; the result of

your fulfilment of the trust of a child committed to your charge. It is this—

“And Death and Life she hateth equally,  
And nothing finds for her despair  
But dreadful Time, dreadful Eternity,  
No comfort anywhere.”

And after this she would look at him, speak to him, no more. No more—save one look, one speech.

He prayed to her, for her, anything but *with* her. He entreated, he accused, condemned himself, cried his cry, and prayed his prayer, his ever-offered prayer, beside her. Told her of how he had been made to see, who was blind; how he, beside whom Judas was a holy man, had yet obtained mercy; how there was one Refuge, one Helper, wholly able, One who loved, and, having loved, loved even to the end.

She heeded him no more than does the iceberg the wind that wails around it, or the passionate tears that drive upon its cold breast.

But he did break, at last, through this dead apathy, or, rather, silence of utter resentment. She made one sign at last, she spoke one word. In his misery—I know not why, nor did he—he had snatched from his brother's table a crucifix, and brought it with him. Now, in the frenzy of his agonised yearning over her, he lifted it above her, and cried, in the words of the monk on the field of battle—

“Oh, look, my child, upon yon sign  
Of the Redeemer's grace Divine :  
Oh, think on faith and bliss !”

She turned round, then, and looked at him. A smile was on her face, terrible as that of a lost spirit. “*I have,*” she said, “the bliss *you gave me*; it is too late to change the faith *you taught me*. See, I, at least, am consistent to the last. Here is the end and summit of your old teaching.” And summoning her failing powers, she hurled away the crucifix, which he held with trembling hand before her. And, so doing, she sank back, and with a few gasps was gone.

Nor did he stay behind. The awful act, the terrific horror of the truth that this was the legitimate and logical result of his own act and neglect—it was too much for his weak and over-wrought frame. With one wild cry, “*I did that, oh God ! I, not she !*”—he sank upon his knees, and, at the very same instant of time, the soul of the father and the soul of the daughter passed out of this state of existence into that, “where, beyond these voices, there is”—*what ?*

\* \* \* \* \*

Was it in a vision, in a trance—how? that the closed curtain that veils spirit-land was drawn from these eyes? I know not. Let me tell what was brought before my ken.

A dark being, stern, severe, with an eternal despair in the eyes, and with Milton's thunder-scars on the brow, awaited the soul of her who spurned the effigy of God made man, dying for sinners. A being



of light—light, soft and dewy, rather than bright and beaming, received, as it left the weary clay, the soul of the contrite sinner. It was not the Angel of the Triumphant, of those who had made the ten talents, of those for whom was laid up the crown. No; it was the Angel of the Penitent. The Angel who led the music of the choirs of heaven over the return of the one sinner that repenteth. The Angel of the weary and heavy-laden, the Angel of the bruised reed and of the smoking flax.

In Paradise this angel and his ministers would breathe upon the dull spark until it should glow with fervour of grateful love, yet never attain to mount upward with towering flame. He would tenderly restore the bruised reed to roundness, and take out the hard clay that yet clung to its flute-holes, so that sweet, if sad music, might breathe from it again.

Sad? No, not *sad* in Paradise. Only the low, weird music of the *bruised reed*, a thing of infinite pathos, a gladness with tears always, as it were, underlying the praise. Different, always, from the trumpet of victory; different, also, from the clarion of joy; different, also, from the harp-music of those who never had known sorrow, had never felt their being "darken like water in the breeze," at the passing over them of the thought of sin.

But, thus escorted, each soul entered upon the unseen, the spirit-world.

And, in an instant, it came before them, the whole panorama of the life that they had lived; and full understanding, as of the blind from birth first looking with clear perception at that which had hitherto been to his mind unreal, a confusion of thought, the pageant of a dream. And, in an instant, with all clear before them, the done and the not done, they felt themselves at the Bar of the preliminary Judgment. The scroll of the *life lived by each* was the writ of Judgment already unrolled before them.

Then they saw that Judgment was no arbitrary act of the Judge, only the ratifying of the choice in the probation-life. Speechless the spirit remained that was lost.

But, even in that Presence, the saved soul poured out its torrent of prayer.

"See, see, O Righteous Arbiter, she is but what I have made her. That be far from Thee, O Judge of all the earth, to punish the innocent for the guilty! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? On me, on me, be the vengeance: let me, oh let me reap the harvest that myself have sown. Spare her, take her to Thy guiding and governing; take her to the healing and the helping of Thy Spirit! On me be it, not on her, O Thou who art the Saviour of the Lost!" Prostrate, silent, before the Effulgence lay the pray-er of this dread prayer.

There was silence for a space. Then a Voice came—

"Spirit, there is in thy plea that which is righteous and just. Also I have for these days past heard and regarded thy prayer.

Take then her place, and let thy part in Paradise be hers, thy child. But take note that this shall be only for so long as thou wilt it. Thou shalt at will pass from the Dark Land into the Land of Light. She, thy child, remember, must then take thy place beyond the gulf. And, if this ever be—as I know thou now deemest it can be never—then, after that, I will grant thee one wish more, so that it be not the reversal of thy destiny. To the greatness of thy devotion I will grant this boon."

The glory died away, and the dark angel advancing took the willing and eager father into his charge.

And the angel of the soft subdued light drew near to the sullen spirit of the child. For how can place and environment alter the "*I*" which each has become? How can circumstances alter character, or life-learned tastes be transformed in a moment?

Abashed, convinced, yet *without love*, the rescued spirit followed the angel into uncongenial loneliness. The pitying angels, and spirits of just men made perfect, approached her, would have warmed her with love, have guided her to peace. But she shrank from them in moody solitude, unhappy in Paradise. And when, as sober-hued fields under a grey quiet sky gleam into light because a rift opens and the sun floods the valley, when, even the peace of Paradise flushed into the thing, joy, at the coming among them of the Lord of Paradise: then, most of all, she would shrink away, uncongenial to that peace, that rapture.

There was a sweet pity in the Master's look, when she thus withdrew. There was, in her heart, an enmity of estrangement which had never known the thing, love. So she paced the pastures of Paradise and beheld the green pastures, and was mirrored in the waters of quietness. But she remained, untormented it is true, left alone, also, at her wish. But—*unhappy in Paradise!*

And the Dark Land, what of that?

Remember, that no hardened sinner, no callous soul, had, following the sombre guide, entered upon the regions of pain, and of blaspheming. No, but choosing it out of utter devotion, a penitent and tender spirit had asked, for his abode, the realm of despair, and the empire of demons. Himself forgiven, yet, having voluntarily assumed the debt of another: nay, for so he well knew it to be, his own debt: really—he had entered upon the land unvisited by white-winged Hope. He had abandoned hope when he had entered there. But his changed heart was with him still, and his penitence, and self-accusing, and his belief in the All-just and loving, and his love, and his gratitude, intensified by this answer to his prayer.

Therefore conceive, if man may, the acuteness of his anguish. For, entering into the dark land, he was by no means exempt from the horror of its very atmosphere. The sorrows of death came upon him, and the pains of hell gat hold of him. He found trouble and heaviness unspeakable, not to be borne, and knew it of no use to call upon the name of the Lord. All the horror of his life came upon him, the

terrible circumstances and consequences of each act of sin, of each neglect; and pardon and peace were, by his own prayer, lifted from his miserable soul. Terrors were turned upon him. The anguish of despair, which, on earth, can drive man to the "anywhere, anywhere, out of the world," was intensified a million-fold. Remorse gnawed his heart, the very vulture of Prometheus; and his *life* was the rock, which, Ixion-like, he would fain have rolled out of sight, but which ever crushed back upon him, yet could not crush him out of being.

And those came round him, whom he had injured, and with low, heavy hate, reproached him, and the cry of despairing souls was ever in his ears, "*But for your act, for your neglect, I had not been here!*" And Sisyphus-like, he was ever broken on the wheel of a never-quiet conscience; and he looked for comfort, and there was none, nor any tears, nor any sleep, nor any dreams, only ghastly reality. And, as of the Danaïdes, his tears flowed, in vain, as it were, into a leaking vessel. And he was tormented in the flame of despair, and knew what was meant by that vain appeal of Dives for one comforting drop to cool his tongue.

And ever at his side a dark form would, from time to time, appear, and a whisper speak to his inmost being. "Say but the word, nay, wish but the wish, and all shall be altered. The green pastures, the quiet waters; these shall be thine. And she, for whom thou endurest this, is she happy? *Thou seest.* It is *hell* with her in Heaven. Thou criest for a drop of that which she hath in a river, and careth not to stoop and taste. Fool, end thy misery; how canst thou, wholly prostrate now, endure everlasting burnings? And this is but the dark of *Hades*. In the future is *Gehenna*, the bottomless pit; and the dreadful resurrection *of the body*, susceptible to what further anguish! And even this thou hast, thou canst no more endure."

So the voice ever whispered, the anguish ever grew, and the intolerable foreboding, and the tearings of the vulture, and the crushing of the stone, and the laceration of the wheel; and, one fear, or a hundred, or a thousand, he knew not which, passed by, and frenzy came upon him, and ah, scarcely knowing what he did, over-goaded, over-borne, he gasped the wish!

And so the Dark Angel stood straightway at the gate of Paradise, and straightway forth from it passed the one unhappy spirit found there. And the Angel of Light entered the abode of gloom, and took by the hand the bewildered and perplexed soul, that realised not what had been done, nor what was to be. And they met and passed—the father and his child—on the way. And still dazed and un-realising he looked at her, and she looked at him. In her look there was contempt, but, yet more, indifference. It was a relief to quit the scene of her weariness and unrest. What lay before her she knew not; at least it would be a change; and the offence of the hated happy faces would jar her weariness no longer.

But he, her father, *knew*. And even as he entered Paradise his

numbed soul awoke to consciousness, and he felt what he had done. And he looked over the dark gulf, and *saw*. Yes, he saw and understood. He beheld the embodiment of black despair fold its darkness round his child. He saw the evil ones draw nigh. He called to mind the utter woe and horror of the dark Hades. He watched her, fixed to the place where he stood. He saw the dreadful change come over her features, the passing away of the callousness and indifference; the advent of terror, horrible fear and dismay. He watched, how long—an hour, a year, a hundred years?—he knew not. He watched, frozen to his place by remorse beyond thought. "And this I have done!" A cry, terrible in its anguish, the first such cry, the last ever heard there, rang through the plains of Paradise. Amaze, not fear, lit "throngs of celestial visages."

But in a moment, in the midst, appeared ONE standing—and there were wound-prints in His hands and on His side. And—"What is this?" He asked. "Is not thy wish granted?"

Down prostrate at His feet fell the agonised soul. "My wish, my wish, it was a wish of madness! O most merciful, Thou didst promise yet one wish more! O grant it! It is this. Let me return to the Dark Land, and take Thou back my child; be my power of reversing my choice *for ever after withdrawn!*"

"Go then, thyself. Bring her hither. It is allowed. Take thou the key of Hades and of Death."

Eagerly, by the path that none without this key may pass, the spirit sped on his way. He stood still—with a subdued brightness suffusing him, *as yet*—at the gate of Hades, the Dark Abode. Beating at it with her hands, on the other side was the child of his love. It opened, she fell into her father's arms, she clung to him, and even in the drawing near to him of despair, his heart strangely rejoiced. "Save me, O father, take me from here! Oh," shrinking from him, "hast thou come to mock me? It is by thy wish that I am in this abode of the damned!"

"Nay, cling to me, my child, and at least cease to *hate* thy father. Even now thou hast cause to hate him, for through him, thou canst not know bliss, even in Paradise. But yet cling to him. He comes to bring thee at least away from here, the abode of demons. He comes to bring thee to the realms, where at least there is for thee quiet, if never joy. He comes to take thy place, and the Master has granted his boon. Henceforth thou art secure. Never more, through the madness of anguish, shall he have even the *power* to alter thy state or his again."

She clung to him still, as it were in a maze, confused, not yet understanding. And even so—she leaning upon him, and he with that taste of blessedness to suffice him through the eternal years of doom—they stood before the Master. And He looked upon them, upon her. And a light broke through the darkness of her soul. "This, then, is," she exclaimed, "LOVE!"

"I see, I know, *I love!* my father. I will not accept the sacrifice, my father, thou lovest, I love—I too will plead." But as she turned towards where the Master stood, lo a wonder! Where she had beheld Him, she now looked upon the vision of the Cross. And ONE hung upon it, and a crown of thorns was crushed upon His patient brow, and driven into His outstretched hands were the great rough nails, and in His feet. And she was aware of a look of love, amazing, divine, in the sad eyes that looked to Heaven; and a voice, heard as in an echo from a far distance of time, spoke remembered words—*"Father, forgive them! For they know not what they do!"*

And as she gazed, the upward look was turned downward again, and with everlasting kindness in it, rested upon *her*.

Prone she fell before the vision in an intensity of anguish, which was yet bliss (being love), and cried—"And for *this* love, I gave but spurning, when I died!" No more. The vision passed. The Presence was there as before, and, the look of Divine love. And it was bent upon her. And love passed into her soul, and hers became thenceforth a seraph's devotion.

"And for Thee, O sad and solitary spirit?" said the Master.

"Only adoring gratitude, my Lord," he answered. "Yes, adored be Thy name; for thus having seen, I take Heaven with me into Hell."

And he turned to go. And a Dark Angel—not the Angel with the thunder-scars—drew near to lead him. But the Master looked at the Angel. And lo, his darkness became suffused with light, as a cloud glows when the sun fills it full with his beams. Dark is the aspect of justice, and bright that of mercy; but with God, justice and mercy are one. The Angel led him not away, but led him to where the Master stood, and the speechless spirit still lay prone at His feet.

"I gave thee no further wish. But I have power, at My will, to grant, unasked, a boon. Thy daughter loves," and He laid His kind hand on her cloud of hair as He spoke. "Thinkest thou that she could find bliss—and her father—nay, Heaven hath no half boons. Enter, happy spirit, conqueror through thine uttermost devotion, enter thou into the rest of thy Lord!"



## PILGRIMS OF THE NIGHT.

BY SARAH DOUDNEY.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

## CALLED HOME.

A TERRIBLE winter was followed by a sickly spring. Although her wedding-day was bright with chilly sunshine, Lady Brackenhill could not forget the suffering, shivering crowds around her. She would have given much to have clasped the Faith-healer's hand once more, but this desire was not granted; the two paths had parted, and it seemed as if they would never meet again.

"Why would she not come to me, Dulcie?" asked the bride, clinging to her sister-in-law before her departure. "I wanted to see her more than I could tell!"

"She said that her work for you was done," Dulcie replied. "You have received your strength through her agency; and now it rests with you to use it rightly. Dear Joscelyne, she cannot give you more than she has already given."

"But I want her for my friend," Joscelyne pleaded. "I hoped to have her often by my side."

"She will always be your friend," answered Dulcie firmly. "Our best friends are the exponents of a vaster Mind and Will; and the light which has shone through them will never leave us. Remember that it is the light we need, not the window through which it shines."

Joscelyne lingered, looking wistfully into the clear brown eyes which met her gaze.

"I have so much to learn——" she was beginning to say. But Lady Audrey's voice was heard in the corridor outside the room.

"My dear Joscelyne, what *are* you doing? Brackenhill is beginning to fidget; he says you will miss the train!"

When the happy pair drove off from the door, all knew that it would be a long time before London saw them again. Lord Brackenhill was going to take his bride abroad; they would travel in an easy fashion, seeing places that Joscelyne had wanted to visit all her life; and it was not likely that they would return to England that year. Lady Brackenhill had wished to begin some new, charitable work at once; but her husband, although he sympathised with her aspirations, was anxious that she should see fresh scenes and breathe a fresh atmosphere.



"I know he is right," said Dulcie to Bennet, as they drove home after the wedding. "He is a good, wise man, and his influence has already been widely felt. But we shall all pine for a sight of her face again."

"It would not have been such a bright face if we had never known you," said Bennet, taking her hand. "Ah, Dulcie, how could we tell that you were to be the blessing of the family!"

She turned towards him with a tender smile.

"You are too kind to me, dear," she answered. "If I have done any good to Joscelyne, it was because I saw what was wanted, that was all."

"I saw Doverill in the church feasting his eyes on you," said Bennet, laughing. "I took the idea of your dress from one of his pictures. Of course you looked as if you had stepped out of the canvas."

She was glad that he was pleased with her appearance; but it had troubled her to spend money on her costume when there was so much distress around them. Her bouquet had been sent by Lord Brackenhill, scarlet geranium and Cape jessamine, loosely tied with rich red ribbon which harmonised with the trimmings of her gown. As she looked down at the flowers, her eyes rested on three gold bracelets. One heavy bangle, clasping the right wrist, was the bridegroom's gift; on the left were two of lighter workmanship from the bride and Lady Audrey. It was strange to see them there; they were the first valuable ornaments that she had ever possessed, and she felt as if they did not belong to her at all. When Bennet, in the warmth of his newly-awakened love, had wanted to buy her a diamond ring, she had entreated him to give up the intention.

"My hands were not made for rings," she said. "I like to see just the plain gold circlet alone. I feel that diamonds would be a hindrance. I could do no manner of useful work if I wore them."

On the day after Joscelyne's wedding Bennet went out early to see his publishers, and Dulcie was alone.

She was very happy now in the enjoyment of that wedded love which she had desired so long. The empty cup was full to the brim; he gave her even more than she had ever asked for, or dreamed of. The real beauty of her nature, corresponding perfectly with that outward beauty which charmed his senses, won from him a homage which he had never accorded to woman before.

And yet her heart turned instinctively to something apart from all the small personal interests of her own life. Her private passions and yearnings had been so long subdued by her love of humanity that they seemed strange to her now. They did not seem of the same importance in her eyes. The stream of her love had been flowing into the boundless ocean, and it was not easy to turn its waters back into the pool of home.

She took off the pretty morning robe which had pleased Bennet

and put on an old serge gown, rough and shabby. Then, in her plain bonnet and cloak, carrying her basket on her arm, she went out, taking her way at once across Oxford Street to the old neighbourhood which she knew so well. Barnaby Mace was in his shop, and gave her a quiet greeting.

"How is it with the people, Brother Mace?" she asked. "I hear rumours of impatience."

"Impatience grows," he answered. "It has to clamour loud before it makes its voice heard. But the great cause moves steadily on, and the angels are hard at work with us. Sister Avory tells us that you are about to live elsewhere."

"Yes," she answered, with a sigh. "We shall move very soon to Kensington. I shall miss our meetings sadly."

"You will join us when you can," he said, kindly. "You are one of us, and nothing can break a spiritual bond. Of late your life has changed. Remember that your duties to humanity must never lead you to forsake your duty as a wife."

"I love my husband, Brother Mace, and I am grateful for his love," replied Dulcie, frankly. "But the Pilgrims of the Night are my brethren; their hands were stretched out to me when I had lost all other guidance."

"You will always be one of us," he repeated. "We ourselves often stumble, and see dimly; but our faith fails not. When you were wandering alone in the wilderness we were permitted to lead you into the right path. But your way runs no longer through desert places, sister. It is fenced about with all the little duties and cares of domestic love and life."

"I know it, brother," she said. "I am like one who walks through a well-ordered garden, and thinks of the wind blowing over the open heath, and the scent of the thyme. May heaven forgive me if there is ingratitude in the thought!"

"There is no ingratitude in it," he answered. "You have felt the glow of a common life with the great multitude which no man can number; and your heart can never contract itself again. It is well, sister. You will teach your children that they are members of one vast family; sons and daughters of an eternal Father."

He paused, and the tears gathered in Dulcie's eyes.

"The night is far spent," he said, taking up his thoughts again. "At first the light was only a glimmer, but it is growing clearer and clearer. We must go on, caring for the people, and letting them know that we feel the sacred bond of human fellowship. Then we shall raise them beyond the reach of their vices and follies, and teach that 'tis heaven must come, not we must go."

Dulcie meditated on his words as she walked through the crowded streets, and stopped at the door she knew. She thought of what he had said about her children. A new hope was springing up in her heart; a new reason for showing tenderness to all mothers

and little ones; and she went back to her home to brood over it in silence.

As the year advanced, the hope grew and strengthened. In her new home at Kensington, Dulcie began to make those quiet preparations which mean so much. Lady Audrey, feeling lonely, had followed the pair who had gone abroad; the house in Berkeley Square was shut up, and Abby was taking care of the Beeches. A new circle of friends was forming round Mrs. Daughton, the wife of the popular novelist. And her own quaint and modest little book had achieved a fair amount of success.

Their new home soon became a centre of attraction to many thoughtful people; but no amount of admiration and attention would ever make a society woman of Dulcie. She filled her position with that simple grace which was one of her charms, and Bennet was more than gratified by the golden opinions which she won. Yet he noticed that she was never elated, never drawn aside from the quiet path which she steadfastly trod.

Doverill's "St. Dorothea" had received a full meed of praise, and was said to be the most successful picture he had ever painted. He was, of course, admitted into the Daughtons' circle, and behaved with so much tact that he and Bennet became better friends than ever. But when they went down to Bolt's farm to spend Witsuntide, and see Dulcie's father and mother, he did not follow them again. They enjoyed their holiday as if they had been a couple of children let loose from school; and Simeon Goss and his wife rejoiced over them greatly.

They left the country in all the fresh sweetness of early June, and came back to London by an evening train. When they were driving homeward from the railway station, Dulcie looked over the crowded roofs, and down the long, dim streets, with a full heart. Her husband, who was looking at her, was struck by the grave expression of her face.

"Are you sorry to return?" he asked.

"No," she answered. "I was only thinking of those who are toiling in those streets from morning till night, and wondering how long such lives will last. They are so sad; there are so few gleams of light in their poor homes! Ah, there is so much work that cries aloud to be done."

"You have done a great deal, Dulcie. Try to think of me, dear; and of the little one who is coming to us by-and-by," said Bennet, gently. He loved her so well that his anxiety was easily awakened, and he recalled her old illness.

"Do you think that I ever forget you?" She laid her hand on his as she spoke. "But I must remember that I have a fellowship with the million. And I have been thinking of Christabel Avory; we do not meet so often as we did in past days."

"She is worthy of your thoughts," said Bennet. "But if I know

her, she would tell you not to be over-anxious at this time. Go to see her, dear, as soon as you like ; or ask her to come to you."

"I wish she would come ; it might rest her. But I am afraid she will not," replied Dulcie, with a sigh. Then the cab stopped at their own door, and when the portmanteau and bags had been carried in, she seemed to have recovered her spirits. There was nothing in her manner to sadden her husband that night.

On the following morning he had an appointment in the City ; and when he was gone she could not remain at home. She hardly knew what it was which had awakened such an eager longing to return to the dim old streets ; but the desire to learn what was happening there excluded all other purposes. Dressing herself as plainly as possible, she hastened out, and soon found herself once more within the walls of Barnaby Mace's shop.

As soon as his glance met hers, she saw that he had something to tell. Customers were coming in and out ; but he spoke a few words to his assistants, and made her a sign to follow him. Then he led the way into a dark passage, and up a short flight of stairs to the long room where the meetings were always held. The benches were piled up against the walls ; but he placed a solitary chair for Dulcie, and sat down on a stool by the open window.

"Sister Avory was here yesterday evening," he began. "She has had the call she has waited and hoped for so long. You know her story ?"

"Yes," Dulcie answered, with a sudden sinking of the heart.

"A letter came from her brother, Mark Avory," continued Barnaby Mace. "It wandered about before it found her, for Mark had not written to her for many years. He is living at the old farm with his wife, and Susan Price, his widowed sister, and their hearts are softened by a great sorrow. In their sore need they have turned to Christabel and asked her forgiveness for all that they made her suffer in the past."

"Ah, that was joy for her," Dulcie said.

"She had had long patience for it," he replied. "Mark's only child, a boy of ten, has been stricken with paralysis. And the father and mother have entreated Christabel to come and cure him ; to them it seemed as if her presence in the old home, from which they drove her forth, would bring them a blessing. I doubt not that it will be so, sister, for where there is faith there is always healing. She will not fail in the work that is given her to do."

"No, she will not fail," said Dulcie. "But—I must see her before she goes. I have a great longing to look upon her face again."

Barnaby Mace's mild grey eyes met hers as if they were reading her thoughts.

"She is gone," he said, slowly. "She started this morning by an early train."

A little cry broke involuntarily from Dulcie's lips. There was

silence for a moment, and then she began to weep bitterly, unable for some seconds to control her tears. Once or twice Barnaby passed his hand across his forehead; but he did not speak till she had grown calm again.

"I know I am weak," she said. "But you will remember some words of hers about this call to her old home? She believed it would come as a sign that her work with us was ended. And we cannot spare her yet!"

"We must be quiet, sister," Barnaby answered. "If she is called we have no power to hold her back; and it would be but a poor love which would detain her. Last evening she sat where you are sitting now, and the light of the evening was upon her face. Life has been wearing her of late; the work has been hard. She told me to give her love to you, and to say farewell."

He paused and drew a long breath before he went on.

"She told me that the path which looked so dark to others had often been very bright to her. She said there was a deeper joy in sorrow than ever was found in mirth, and that the lonely pilgrim has a double share of strength. She said that much had been taken away, that more might be bestowed, and that the richest gifts were given through empty hands. Her life has been used because of its lovingness to touch other lives, and soften them with love."

Dulcie listened to these words in silence; and when he ceased to speak she rose to take her leave. She shook hands with him quietly, and he stood at his shop-door watching her walk away.

Everything in those old streets seemed to have a new meaning for her that morning. She passed the shop where the Faith-healer often bought flowers for the sick, and saw the bowls and glasses full of roses, red and yellow, and white; their sweetness floated across the foul odours from the crowded houses. She met a little lad who acted sometimes as Christabel's messenger, and the boy's face seemed suddenly and strangely dear.

Like one who moved in a dream she found herself at the door of her new home again. Bennet, who had unexpectedly returned, caught a glimpse of her face as she went slowly upstairs. He followed her into her room, and shut the door.

When she saw him standing so near her she gave a little cry of relief and held out her hands to him.

"Dulcie?" he said inquiringly, and drew her close to his breast.

"Oh," she said softly, "let us walk together always! A great light will be withdrawn from my path. I feel it—I know it."

## CHAPTER XXVII.

## THE RETURN.

THE train was rushing on, down the South Western line, in the early freshness of the summer day. Liphook, with its pretty red villas, and roads winding away into deep shadows, was left behind. Liss, with its woody lanes and trim cottages, was passed; and then came the far-folding hills, and the sweet, lone country, where houses were few and far between. A woman, sitting all alone in a third-class carriage, looked out through the open window, and clasped her hands in an ecstasy of mute thanksgiving.

"I am going home," she said, speaking the words aloud in her intense joy. "I have suffered and prayed; I have toiled day and night, and have been very weary. And now I am going home!"

She was meanly dressed in a dark-grey gown of some woollen material; a leather bag and a black serge cloak lay beside her on the seat. The hard winter, and the distress that lasted far into the spring, had left the Faith-healer with little money to spend on any needs of her own. Her cheeks were thinner; the noble outlines of the face were more strongly marked; but the lips kept their sweet curve of patience, and the eyes had not lost their kindly light.

When the train stopped at last at the unpretending little station she was the only passenger who got out there. For a moment she stood motionless on the platform, looking inquiringly at a tall man with a grey beard and haggard face.

The man looked at her and hesitated. Then they both advanced and clasped hands, and he was the first to speak.

"Christabel, this is kind of you. God bless you for coming!"

"Oh, Mark, you don't know how glad I am to come!" she said. Her strong will kept down a rising sob.

"We ought to have asked you sooner," he confessed. "Our hearts have been very hard, my dear; but the trouble about the little lad has softened us. You'll hardly know Susan. Now that I look right at you, Christabel, I think you are less altered than she is. But it is a strange thing to see you with white hair!"

"Think of the years that have rolled away since we met!" she answered.

They crossed the line together, and she gave up her ticket on the other side. Mark's cart was waiting in the quiet road. He helped Christabel into her seat, took his place beside her, and the sturdy cob set off at an easy trot.

In a few minutes they had left the station and houses behind, and were jogging along a silent way with the dense woods rising on the right and left.



"Are there any changes in the neighbourhood, Mark?" she asked, after a long pause.

"A good many have been laid in the churchyard since you were here," he replied. "Mrs. Needall was one of the first to go. Jim has got his father's place, and lives in the gamekeeper's old cottage. He's married, and has boys of his own."

"Is Mr. Burnsey living still?" said Christabel.

"No—he got very gouty, and had a sudden end three years ago. Our new parson is a different man altogether; he's as busy as a bee, and keeps us all alive. I don't think he'd quarrel with your views as old Burnsey did."

Christabel smiled. "The Burnsey race is slowly dying out," she said. "And now tell me about Susan. Was she happy in her marriage?"

Mark shook his head.

"Anything but happy. Price was a hard, grasping man, with a bitter temper; he wore her to a shadow before he died. Then, too, he lost nearly all that he had, and she is poorly provided for. As we have only one child, we offered her a shelter in the old home. She was glad enough to come, poor thing!"

"Poor Susan," Christabel sighed. "And does the farm prosper?"

He shook his head again.

"It doesn't pay," he said dolefully. "I could not make two ends meet if I didn't do other things. But my Jane is a thrifty woman, and Susan helps her in the house-work; so we keep no servant, and live as cheaply as we can. It would break my heart to leave the old place."

"Have you ever thought of leaving it?" she asked.

"Sometimes—when times have been very bad. Bryan Larcombe won't reduce the rent a penny. He leads an awful life, Christabel!"

"He was always wicked, Mark."

"Yes; but I used to think he would be better if he could have won you. Nowadays, I see that I was very wrong. It isn't right to sacrifice a good woman for a bad man's sake; and I don't believe that you could have reformed him. It seems to me that he was born with a demon in him."

Christabel shuddered. But the summer air was sweet with honeysuckle; and presently the woods opened, and there were trim hedges and green fields. A low cry of joy burst from her lips as the little grey house came in sight, standing all alone on rising ground. Nothing here had changed; there was the rough land stretching away to the woods—a wilderness where uncultivated flowers were scattered in gay profusion, and bramble and bracken, brier and thistle, grew unchecked.

There was the rotten fence, dividing the waste from the smooth meadow where the cows were feeding peacefully in the sunshine. And there was the wicket, guarded by the yew-trees, which led

from the meadow into the garden—the quiet old garden where Christabel used to walk and dream.

Nothing was changed ! The porch over the door still sustained its light load of creepers. The roses went climbing up the rough flint walls ; the everlasting-pea spread its gaudy blossoms near the beehive. When the cart stopped, and Christabel alighted, she saw two women coming down the path to give her a welcome ; and they both seemed to be strangers.

The one who advanced first was small and withered ; the face that she held up to be kissed was covered with a network of wrinkles, and the eyes were dim. It was Susan ; but Susan as she might have appeared in some strange dream. Her very voice was altered ; but there was genuine gladness in her words.

"Thank God for letting me see you again, Christabel ! I've repented truly of all my unkindness, and I have suffered for it—ah, that I have ! This is Mark's wife—Jane, you know ; our poor little Charley's mother."

Jane Avory was a quiet-mannered woman, with a look of intelligence and truth. Christabel felt drawn towards her at once. It was almost a relief to turn from poor, shrunken Susan to Jane's healthy face and clear eyes. And yet she kept Susan's hand clasped in hers as they walked up the path to the house.

"Everything has been kept just as it was when mother lived," said Susan. "See the old parlour ! There's the cushion that she worked, and the footstool. Here's the china basket that father brought for her one market-day. You used to like it, Christabel ; so we got it out, and filled it with roses."

"Thank you, Susan," her sister said gratefully.

The room was filled with memories that were sweeter than the roses. She stood in silence for a moment, calling up a vision of her mother sitting in the old seat in the sofa corner. Somehow the dead seemed nearer to her than the living. *They* had not grown old and faded like these poor trouble-worn mortals who were left behind to fill their places. It was well for them to be out of the reach of time's changes. Christabel roused herself and followed Susan upstairs.

"You would like to have a wash before you come down again," said Mrs. Price, ministering to her wants with eager attention. "Ah, you look more like yourself without a bonnet ! Dear me, your hair is all as white as silver ; but how thick it is still ! Now I have only a little bit left, and that's why I wear a cap. You dress very plainly, Christabel ; but you never did care much for fine clothes in the old days."

"It is a hard matter for some people to get clothes at all. One loses all pleasure in pretty dresses when one lives among the London poor," said Christabel.

Susan Price looked at her attentively, admiring the massive silver coils wound round her shapely head, and thinking that the tall figure

wore the poor woollen gown as if it had been a royal robe. All her old jealousy of Christabel had died a natural death. For the first time she was realising that there was something in her sister which won homage and love.

"You are still handsome," she said. "I am glad that Byran Larcombe is not at home. He has gone off to the town, and there he'll stay drinking and roystering for weeks, I daresay. If he were to see you again, his old, mad passion might come back, even now."

"Do not talk of him," said Christabel, shivering, as his evil face rose up in her mind.

When Susan had left the room she stood for a few minutes looking out upon the old landscape which she had seen so often in dreams. The woods were fresh with the green of June, and the tree-tops feathered out against the blue of a cloudless sky. Her fancy went straying away into the paths that wound through those great woods, and she remembered how the dog-roses flung their blossoms from bough to bough.

She found them assembled in the sitting-room when she went downstairs, a room which opened into the kitchen, and was larger than the parlour. The paralysed boy, reclining in a large chair, flushed and brightened when he saw her face. He had his mother's look of intelligence and frankness. Christabel went to his side at once, and kissed him on the brow.

"Do you know me, Charley?" she asked, looking into his earnest eyes.

"Yes; you are the aunt who has come from London to make me walk again," he answered.

"It is God who will make you walk again," she said. "He uses me; I have no power that does not come straight from Him."

"Will He let you cure me?" he asked, with a sudden anxiety in his tone.

"I am sure that He will. But you must be sure, too. You must believe that He is able to cure you, and then the new strength will come."

She was very happy when she sat down to the table with Charley by her side. There had been a hunger in her heart which only the old home could fill; and even the tall clock, ticking in the corner, seemed to smile a welcome. The fresh country taste of the food; the pure water; the light shining freely into the familiar room; all these common things were invigorating influences, bringing back the strength which had begun to wane in the stress of London life.

In the afternoon they persuaded her to lie down for a little while on the old sofa in the parlour. She lay there in perfect peace, looking out, through open doors, into the porch where birds sang and twittered in a bower of leaves. A sweet breath from the roses stole across her face, and then her eyes closed unawares, and she floated away into a tranquil dreamland.

All whom she had ever cared for seemed to gather round her as she slept. "How happy I am!" she thought. "These meetings make amends for all the partings." Her mother bent over her with a smiling face; Vincent Forth stood by, his hand resting on her father's shoulder; Mrs. Needall looked at her with eyes full of gladness. When she woke, suddenly, yet gently, their voices were still murmuring in her ears; but she found only the bees humming round the window, and a white butterfly flitting about the room.

Jane Ivory stepped in quietly to ask if she were rested. She rose, feeling as if she had bathed in the fountain of youth, and owned that she had been greatly in need of a good sleep. Then Mark came in from the fields, bringing the scent of new-mown grass with him, and Christabel sat down to the tea-table beside Charley. The boy's eyes met hers with a look of happy trust which went straight to her heart.

When Susan had carried away the tea-things, and Jane had gone into the kitchen, the aunt and nephew were left alone together. She took his hand, and sat leaning on the arm of his chair.

"Have they told you that I used to be a strong boy?" he said. "None of the other fellows could beat me at running. It is a year ago since all the feeling went out of my legs."

"The fever came first, didn't it?" said Christabel.

"Yes; the fever did it all. It was a long, long illness; poor mother and Aunt Susan were quite worn out with nursing me. And I was so very, very tired of being ill; it seemed beautiful to sit up among the pillows at last. I got almost well, and then I stopped short. They say it is only a year ago, but it feels as if I'd been sitting here for fifty years."

"A year is only a short time," Christabel answered. "Think now of that poor man who waited in the colonnade outside the Pool of Bethesda. Think how weary he must have been of seeing others go down to the water, and come up well! And yet, if he had but known, he need not have been so downcast. There was One drawing nearer and nearer to the spot where he lay; there was a Friend coming to change his dreary life. Think of it, Charley."

Her gaze was fixed upon him steadily; her hand held his in a firm clasp.

"He is drawing nearer and nearer every moment to you," she went on. "You cannot see Him; you do not even hear His footsteps; but you can *feel* that He is coming."

She was silent, and the force of her suggestion pressed strongly on the boy's mind. All the power of her great will was urging him to believe in her words. In that solemn silence he began to be conscious of a strange thrill which seemed to be quivering through his body from head to foot—yes, even to the poor feet, so long heavy and dead.

She waited long enough for her thought to sway him. She saw that his eyes were bright, and a slight flush had risen to his cheeks.

"Charley, pray for the courage to get up and meet Him! It is only your timidity that keeps you sitting there. He tells you to rise."

As she spoke she rose herself, still holding the lad with her firm hand. "Courage," she repeated as she drew him up with her. "Ah, it is not as hard as you thought; faith can do all things!"

He leaned upon her, his heart throbbing fast. She was careful not to tire him on that first evening; but even then the boy was almost a new creature. Her firm belief that she had been called to her old home to do this work was implanted in his mind also. Charley went to sleep that night with the certainty that he should walk again.

The Faith-healer herself was full of wonderful happiness and strength. The return to her woods and fields was a complete cure for that home-sickness from which she had suffered for years. Jim Needall brought his sturdy boys to give her a greeting; his sunburnt face was flushed with feeling when he grasped her hand and besought her not to go away.

"There is work enough for you to do in the country," he said.

"I am not going away yet," she answered. "Is not Charley getting on fast? He will soon walk across the fields to your cottage."

He did walk across the fields to Needall's cottage a fortnight after Christabel's arrival. It was a cure that was much talked about in the neighbourhood, and the fame of the Faith-healer began to be noised abroad in that part of the county.

Her heart was not saddened, even when she went up, through winding lanes, to the churchyard among the hills. The graves were sweet with the sunshine and rain of many summers, and the headstones were slowly changing from white to grey. It was a place of sunlight and soft breezes; standing there you could look away to those old hills which have been the battle-ground of many races whose histories are lost; but close about your feet the grass covers the dust of a gentler people, who have laid them down in peace to take their rest.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### THE END OF THE PILGRIMAGE.

As Jim Needall had said, there was work for the Faith-healer to do in the country. June came to an end, and found her feet still lingering in the flowery paths she loved so well.

The new vicar, a man whose mind had been enlightened concerning many things, was disposed to look indulgently on all that she did. Her very presence brought peace into many a dark little room.

The strong faith that could restore the dead limbs had power to uplift the sinking soul. The dying clung to her, believing that she could see what lay beyond the veil of death. They trusted to her spiritual sight, and listened to her confident words, and were comforted; for this woman had a marvellous gift of impressing her convictions on others, and used it for their good. Her intense belief in the reality of an unseen world made that world real to those around her. They saw with her eyes and heard with her ears.

Meanwhile her own life was brimming over with the best kind of happiness. Hers was the joy of being used to raise other lives, and bring out the best that was in them. She could see the results of her labours in this quiet country world; the depression that comes to those who toil in a crowd was not felt here. Her love was poured out like rich wine to all who had need, and they came to her eagerly and gladly.

Mark and Susan looked back upon their old bitterness and blindness as an evil dream. They had lived a cold, hard life, keeping out the warmth that would have flowed in upon them from Christabel's genial nature. And now they could not get near enough to this great heart that yearned over them; nor could they find words to tell her how deep was their gratitude and affection.

All the little things that she said and did were treasured up in their memories, and appealed to them long afterwards. One day, when Mark had been speaking of a poor man who had half starved himself to give his wife a decent burial, Christabel shook her head sadly.

"I wish I could have led him to think differently," she said. "When 'the dust returns to the earth as it was,' it would be far kinder to carry it to the sod with good cheer. Instead of a dismal hearse, I would have a wagon, covered with green boughs and flowers."

The first days of July were hot and still. The Avorys were early risers, and Christabel loved to come out into the first freshness of the summer dawn.

One morning she was standing in her old place between the yew-trees, looking away across the meadow to the waste land and the woods beyond. The familiar scene seemed changed just then into a newly created paradise. Bathed in its first dew, the landscape was a soft confusion of shades and lights and mists, and the Faith-healer, resting her arm on the gate-post, was listening to the early chorus of the birds.

A boy came tramping up the garden path, carrying a note; and seeing her there, he put it into her hand. He had been told, he said, to wait for an answer.

The letter was addressed to herself, and was from an old school-fellow who had married and settled in a neighbouring hamlet. She entreated Christabel to come and spend a night under her roof. Her youngest child, a little girl of two years old, was wasting away; and



it seemed as if the doctor did her no good. The poor mother had an intense belief in her old companion's powers. Christabel had never been quite like other girls; she had always been stronger, braver, and kinder; would she come?

The Faith-healer looked up from the letter with shining eyes.

"Give her my love," she said to the lad, "and tell her that I will go to her this evening."

She turned and walked slowly into the house, pausing as she passed the white moss-rose bush. As she bent lovingly over the flowers, a sudden remembrance flashed across her mind, and she saw Bryan Larcombe as he had looked when he snatched a half-open rose from this very tree. The scene came back in an instant; the cruel fingers tearing the flower to pieces and flinging it away; the evil eyes staring savagely into hers; the quiet figure of her mother standing by with a troubled face. It was a memory which clouded the early brightness of the morning, and wrung a deep sigh from her unawares. Why had that man's wickedness been suffered to triumph? Why had he gone on living his bad life while Vincent Forth had passed away? It was a very old question; and then she remembered that a life like Forth's can never die.

"Come in to breakfast, Aunt Christabel," said Charley's fresh young voice. "It's all ready, and I won't begin without you."

Her face was bright again as she took her accustomed seat, still holding the letter in her hand.

"Susan," she said, "I have just heard from Rebecca Lynch. You know she used to be fond of me when we were girls together?"

"Of course I do!" Susan replied. "She married and went away from these parts. But some one told me that she had come back to live at Littledean."

"She has asked me to go to Littledean to-night," Christabel said. "Her child is ill with a wasting sickness. It is a call which must be obeyed."

Charley's face clouded over for a moment.

"Oh, Aunt Christabel, you promised to read me that story-poem again this evening!" he cried. "Don't you know? About Sir Launfel and the leper?"

"I have not forgotten," she answered. "You shall read it yourself when I am gone. I will leave the book with you."

The happy summer day went swiftly by. Some old neighbours came in for a chat in the afternoon; and Christabel sat with them in the summer-house at the end of the garden. They lingered, talking about by-gone times and drinking tea, until the shadows began to lengthen in the fields; and then they went away. The Faith-healer took up her little black bag, hung her serge cloak over her arm and said she must be going too.

Jane and Susan walked down the path to the meadow-gate and kissed her at parting.

"Come back early to-morrow!" they cried, as they stood and watched her crossing the level grass. They followed her with their eyes until she had climbed the low fence between the meadow and the waste ground which skirted the woods.

Only one who had known those old woods from childhood could have found his way among their many paths. But the Faith-healer was not puzzled for a moment. She went on, treading out fragrance at every step, and seeing new golden lights at every turn. The fresh, wholesome scent of the bracken filled the air. Here and there the bramble-flowers showed their delicate clusters, and the wild rose blushed faintly; and once she passed a quiet pond where the water-lilies floated untouched all day. Unseen creatures fled into the shadows with a swift rustle, or sometimes there was a soft sound of breaking twigs in the underwood.

The ride that she traversed would lead her out into the old coach road, and then a short walk would take her on to the little hamlet. It was a way that she had loved in her girlhood, and her mind was full of the sweetness of those early days. Here she had walked with Vincent when he was called forth to heal the sick; here she had skipped along, a merry child, by her father's side, gathering sprays of honeysuckle to take home to her mother. Surely this was the very spot where the best flowers always grew! How sweet it was to find these woody nooks unchanged!

She paused to break off a handful of rich blossoms, and then plucked cluster after cluster with the fresh delight of a child. She had dropped her bag on the grass, and was standing still, intent on arranging her spoils into one big bunch.

"Beautiful!" she murmured with a serene sense of satisfaction, holding the nosegay to her face for a moment. A harsh laugh, close at hand, startled her; but she was a brave woman, and her nerves were well under control.

Yet, when she saw who it was that laughed, a chill crept over her and she shivered in the warm evening air. It was Bryan Larcombe who stood before her, looking a very incarnation of evil.

He had been drinking heavily; his vicious face was dark red; his eyes seemed to have a red sparkle in them. Sin had set its mark upon every feature of that face, destroying every trace of manliness, and blotting out all vestiges of youth. In his earlier days, Bryan Larcombe had not been without some good qualities which, if they had been fostered, would have saved him from ruin; but very few healthy influences had been brought to bear on his life. His feeling for Christabel Avory had been one of those violent passions which might, or might not, have proved the prelude of true love. Thwarted, it had turned into a peculiarly fiendish kind of hate.

"I thought we should meet," he said with a snarl in his voice. "I heard you were here, and I've been looking out for you. Aren't you glad to see an old friend?"

"We have never been friends, Mr. Larcombe," she replied. As she spoke she picked up her bag and began to walk on. But he was standing right in her way.

"It was your fault if we were not," he said savagely. "You disgraced yourself by taking up that low tramp of a quack doctor. What have you been doing all these years? Spoiling other men's lives as you did mine?"

"I did not spoil your life," she answered with dignity. "You know that I did not. Stand aside and let me go on."

"Not yet, Christabel, not yet," he said, and a strange look of anguish passed over his disfigured face. "They tell me you have been going about doing good. Why are you so unwilling to do good to me?"

"God knows I would do good to you if I could," she said earnestly. "But I know not how; there is no light to show what can be done. Let me pass now; it is growing late, and I am expected."

"Where are you going?" he asked roughly.

"To Littledean, to see Rebecca Lynch and her sick child. Pray let me pass, Mr. Larcombe."

"There is no need to hurry," he answered. "It won't hurt you to stand here for a few minutes and let me look at you. I suppose you will not believe that I've been hungering for a sight of your face. I suppose you will sneer if I say that I never cared for any other woman as I cared for you. If that dead dog had not come between us I might have won you."

"You deceive yourself," she said, sadly. "What the soul needs, it always finds; if not here, then hereafter. If I had never seen *him* I could not have taken you."

The golden glow in the sky was slowly fading; a cool breath came creeping through the warm woods and stirring the leaves. Again she took a step forward, but he would not move.

"If *he* did not come between us, what did?" he asked. "Was it your cursed religion? I hadn't led the cleanest of lives, I'll admit; but you might have made a decent fellow of me if you had liked. I would even have gone to church or meeting-house to please you. Hundreds of girls would have taken me willingly enough. It doesn't matter a rap what a man's life has been, if he will only keep straight after he is married."

The pure noble face of the Faith-healer flushed with righteous indignation. She looked up to the clear sky above the trees with eyes that seemed to implore help from an unseen power. Then she tried to pass on her way.

"You shall not go," he said. "I hate you. I wish you were all dead, you women who cant about virtue, and want to put a stop to all our good times. It doesn't signify whether we live good lives or bad lives; there's only one ending for sinner or saint. As to the heaven you preach about, I don't believe in it. There's no heaven, and no hell."

She saw now that he had given himself up to all the evil that was in him, and stood in silence for a moment considering a way of escape. As she stood there, she seemed to see a vision of the long room over the shoemaker's shop and the calm faces of the Pilgrims of the Night. At this very hour they had gathered themselves together to comfort each other with thoughts of the coming dawn. Perhaps they were thinking of her, and praying that her faith might never fail; praying that she might have more and more of that divine love which spends itself on other lives, and changes their darkness into day.

"You are afraid," he said hoarsely, seizing her arm. "You think I am going to kill you, and you want to live."

Her eyes looked beyond his wicked face, and rested on the evening star which hung like a lamp above the trees.

"No," she said, "I fear not those who can kill the body. He whom I worship is not the God of the dead, but of the living. You can only set the spirit free from its burden of clay."

He still held her arm fast, never once removing his gaze from her face.

"Your future life is only a dream!" he cried. "There is nothing that will survive the clay you speak of; you will go out into the darkness."

"No," she answered. "From the darkness to the light."

He dropped her arm suddenly, and stepped backward a few paces. The action was so swift and unexpected that she did not move, but stood erect in the narrow path, not knowing whether she could go or stay. There was but a little moment of silence; then came a flash, and a sharp report, and she fell to the ground, shot through the heart.

The last faint glow of daylight faded out of the west, and the sweet half-darkness of the summer night descended on the old woods. The man who had gone hurrying through those deserted paths in the stillness could not have told how it was that he came to be standing at his own door. This night, the day before, and many other days and nights all seemed mingled in one meaningless whirl, and he could not separate the doings of one time from those of another time. Mechanically he lifted the latch, and found a lamp burning on the hall-table as usual. A maid-servant who had heard his step came forward to see if he wanted anything. His answer was a muttered curse, and she was retiring when he shouted to her to come back.

"What is all this noise for?" he cried. "Who's making this infernal din upstairs and down? Stop it at once; I won't have it, I say!"

The woman stared. "There's no noise at all, sir. The house is quite still."

"You are lying," he yelled. "I can't hear myself speak. They're at it like devils, screeching, laughing, ah, the laughing is the worst of it all! It's a queer thing that they should laugh when there's somebody outside lying dead."

The housemaid, terribly frightened, went flying downstairs to the cook, an elderly woman who had lived in the Larcombe family for many years. They listened for some moments to the cries and imprecations of the madman in the hall, and then both their faces grew white with horror and fear. After a little while they stole out together by a back door, and went to seek for help in the village.

The brief night soon came to an end, and the pink dawn came flushing up over the deep woods. Birds were singing in an ecstasy of morning joy; the soft air was full of honeysuckle sweetness, and everything that had breath praised the opening day. But the Faith-healer lay silent and still, with her face upturned to the sky.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### THOSE THAT WERE LEFT.

WHEN the tidings came to Barnaby Mace he received them without any surprise. He had known that those amongst whom the Faith-healer had laboured would see her face on earth no more. But true to the bent of his mind, he looked for consolation from his teachers, the Mystics, and did not fail to find it.

It was harder, however, to comfort the children for the loss of their friend. They rebelled against the fact of her disappearance with all the passion of childhood; they had wanted her to stay always with them, and she had been suddenly snatched away. It was too hard, too cruel an experience for these little ones to whom the life-journey seemed so immensely long. And seeing this, Barnaby Mace devoted himself especially to the task of consoling them.

"Why are you fretting?" he asked, gently, lifting little Harry Warder up to his knee. "Are you sorry that Christabel is an angel? If she had gone on living and working here she would have been an old woman, like poor Granny Martin in the next street; but now she will never know old age. To grow old in heaven is to grow young. She loved beautiful scenes and flowers, and she will have them around her; she loved to help others, and she will help them in a thousand lovely ways. When you go into her world you will know her, and be glad to see her so fresh and bright; and she will teach you things that will fit you to live in your new home. She will show you all that you want to see, and far more than you have ever thought of seeing."

"If it's going to be just like that," said Harry, "I won't cry any more. And I'm glad she's gone because I loved her so. Oh, Brother Mace, I just loved her as hard as ever I could love!"

There was a child's wisdom in those words. *Because* he loved

her, he was glad she was gone. He would not, if he could, have dragged her back into the old working-day world which she had brightened with her presence. Child as he was, Harry had fully realised that it was a weary old world, tired of its own pushing and struggling and wrangling, and he often wished that there were more room for little boys and girls who wanted to have a game. Christabel, he firmly believed, had gone where she could have every good thing that was lacking here; and all the true love of his little heart arose, and overflowed the selfish longing for her return. But there were other children crying for her, and Barnaby Mace began to consider what he should do for them all. It occurred to him at length to call a meeting of the Pilgrims, and suggest a plan for making Christabel's burial day a day of gladness.

He thought that it would be a satisfaction to the children, who had so loved her, to see the spot where the dear body was laid away under the flowers and grass. They would have a long, bright holiday—just such a holiday as she had always wanted to give them; and they would see the haunts of her childhood and the home where her life had begun. They would realise that her life had not stopped, but was going on elsewhere; and, however fair those country scenes might be, the home to which she had departed was fairer still. Let them see beauty, he said, and they will understand that it is but the shadow of a higher beauty to which it corresponds. "I want to show the children that 'earth's crammed with heaven!'"

"The Faith-healer is to be buried to-day," said Mr. Linstead, as he sat at the breakfast-table. He was the vicar who had succeeded old Mr. Burnsey in the little parish among the hills. His wife, who was pouring out coffee, looked up with a sigh.

"It has been a terrible tragedy," she said. "I hoped that we should not have any tragedies here; and we have all felt it so keenly that it has taken the sweetness out of the summer. I don't think I shall ever walk through the woods again. It must have quite spoiled your holiday, Frank," she added, glancing at a young man who sat at the table.

He was a languid man, clean shaven, with dreamy eyes, and strong, well-cut features, and he looked as if he were just recovering from severe illness.

"No," he answered. "But it has given me something to think about. She was a remarkable woman!"

"And she will have a remarkable funeral, if I am not mistaken," the vicar said.

"Are you going to let all those queer people do things in their own way, Charles?" his wife asked. "I hope they won't be irreverent; irreverence is always doubly painful at a funeral!"

"I shall certainly let them do things in their own way," he replied. "And I am sure there will be no irreverence."

Mrs. Linstead sighed again, and Frank Cardwell smiled. She was



his sister, and he knew that the vicar's liberal mind was a puzzle and a trouble to her. But she was a kind woman, and her brother owed much of his returning health to her motherly care and tenderness. He had studied too hard at Oxford, and had come to the vicarage to be nursed.

"Charles, dear, I want to speak to you," said the wife, when her husband rose from the table. She followed him out of the room and into the garden.

"Do you think Frank ought to see the funeral?" she said. "You know how his doubts distress me; and I am afraid it will not be good for him to come into contact with these queer people. If we could only bring him back to the dear old paths——"

"Don't worry yourself about him, Nelly," answered the vicar good-humouredly. "Have you never read that a certain city has twelve gates? You may go in at one gate, and he may enter by another. Just leave him alone, and he will get on all right."

It was a perfect summer day; the softest of breezes wandered down from the hills, and went sighing through the valleys. The doves were cooing in the depths of the woods, and the larks were soaring and singing above the cornfields. As the morning wore on, and the light lay bright and broad over down and plain, a number of meanly dressed people conducted a band of children up the winding lanes that led to the churchyard.

They were a pale-faced company, but there was not a single countenance that did not express a strange peace—strange, because peace is seldom a permanent expression on human faces, and these people wore it always. It was noticed that they looked intently at the country folks as they passed them, and it was a look which so plainly spoke of simple fellowship, that many were touched by the kindness in the gaze of these poor strangers. In the middle of the procession came a waggon which seemed to be nearly full of green boughs and flowers. Most of the children carried wild flowers and little branches of oak or fir; and from time to time their elders spoke to them, and pointed to the lights and shadows flitting over the hills and the rich colouring of field and plain. The little faces were lifted, full of interest and intelligence; but all at once one small boy glanced at the waggon, and his lip trembled, and his face worked with an unconquerable spasm of grief.

The waggon stopped at the churchyard gate, and the vicar met them with the familiar words. When they were standing beside the grave, Mark Avory wept bitterly; but Barnaby Mace looked up and shed no tear, and the rest were quiet until the service came to an end. Mrs. Linstead's mind was relieved. She had been scandalised by the waggon, but the people had accepted the burial office meekly, and had conducted themselves with propriety. No fault could be found with the children—one or two struggled silently with their tears—but there was no scene.

Only, when all was over and the clergyman had moved away, they all drew close together, and presently there arose from that humble crowd a hymn of prayer and praise. The children joined in it, forgetting that they had wanted to weep, and putting all their hearts into the strain, until it swelled into a triumphant song which seemed to rise into "a solemn scorn of ills."

They were singing out of the heaven that each held in his own heart; the "kingdom" which was not outside them as a dazzling promise, but was within them as a longing for the highest things.

When they were gone, and the churchyard was left to its sunny quietness, the vicar found Frank Cardwell leaning upon the gate, and following with thoughtful eyes the departing procession winding down the lanes. The young man looked up at him with a smile.

"They are very happy in their delusion, if it *is* a delusion," he said. "I don't know what to call it; it is a thing that is beyond my understanding."

"It has been called by many names," Mr. Linstead answered, "but in simple truth it has only one, and that is the name which the children know best. The influence which ruled the Faith-healer's life was love. They were no miracles that she wrought; her great yearning to be used for good fulfilled itself. It was impossible not to be warmed by the glow of that passionate charity which burned within her. And in the lonely life of this woman, driven out from the home that should have sheltered her, and from the hearts that ought to have clung to her, you can see the reflection of another Life; for the Son of Man had not where to lay His head. In the bitter spite of the bigots who persecuted her, and the evil minds that pursued her, you hear the echo of those anathemas which followed Him. Oh, Frank, I say again that they were no miracles that she wrought! When we cease wrangling about creeds our faith will become in truth an evidence of things unseen; and when we forget our 'isms,' and learn how to use the forces which we waste on religious controversy, we, too, may find within us the growth of that Divine power to bless and heal."

THE END.

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## ANECDOTES AND ADVENTURES.

BY LINDON MEADOWS.

## VANSITTART'S VOW.

## I.

THE vicarage of H——, situated a short distance from the village, stood in a thickly shrubberied garden of about three-quarters of an acre in extent. In the centre of the picturesque little lawn was a rather weedy pond, in which one solitary goldfish was wont to disport himself, emitting a crimson gleam, like a flash of summer lightning, now and then as he darted by and turned up his side for the benefit of anyone who might be looking on from the narrow walk that encircled his watery domain. A solitary goldfish, I said, for there was but one, and he evidently of a retiring disposition and bachelor-like habits. What had become of all his finny friends I cannot say. Suffice it that he preferred solitude, and appeared to lead an easy and comfortable life, undisturbed by the cares and disquietudes that attend a more sociable and less selfish phase of existence.

Enough, however, of the pond and its scaly tenant, which have nothing to do with my story.

The dwellers in the vicarage-house were the incumbent of the living, the Reverend Dr. Beaumont, his young and beautiful daughter Lucy, and two servants—a housemaid and cook. There was a short red-waistcoated man who acted as groom and gardener, but he lived in a cottage hard by, and took no part in the house duties, except as regarded the cleaning of the shoes, furbishing of knives and forks, and the occasional shaking of carpets, which last service he performed with a somewhat sulky air, as that of a man who felt himself a little demeaned by the process and fitted for something better. The housemaid's name was Mary Mantle, the cook's Maria Marks, and the groom's John Billett.

In enumerating the different members of the vicarage household, I might as well have included the vicar's curate, Laurence Westwood, for though he did not live actually under the same roof—having rooms at a farmhouse a quarter of a mile away—he was oftener there than in his own quarters, being the lover of the charming Lucy, and their wedding, all being well, having been arranged to take place in the following spring.

Time—evening. The vicar seated in the drawing-room over a game of chess with Laurence; Lucy, not far off, doing some fine kind

of needlework; Dr. Beaumont checkmated, and returning his dead men solemnly to the box.

"Lucy, my dear."

"Yes, papa."

"Go into my study and bring me my snuff-box"—an odious habit that still clung to him—"from the corner of my writing-table. This villain Laurence managed to capture my queen, and I will have my revenge another time."

Lucy returned hastily, looking agitated.

"Papa, who is that old gentleman seated in your study?"

"Old gentleman, child? I am the only old gentleman on the premises that I know of. What mean you?"

"There is an elderly personage in a black velvet skull-cap, sitting in your chair before the fire. His back was turned towards me, and I could not see his face."

The vicar sprang to his feet, and Laurence rose, too, excitedly.

"You must be dreaming! Laurence, go and look—stay, I will accompany you."

They left the room together, but the curate took the post of honour and went first. The door of the study was ajar, and all peeped nervously in, Lucy holding her lover by the skirt of his coat, in order to draw him back in case of danger.

Yes, there sat the stranger, sure enough, attired in the way already described, and engaged in the perusal of a large volume.

"This is something uncanny," whispered Dr. Beaumont, stepping back and drawing the door quietly to. "Let us all retire for the present. Lucy"—when they had returned to the drawing-room—"ring the bell. This matter must be kept a secret from the maids, or they will both decamp together at a moment's notice. It will not do for the house to be reported haunted."

Mary Mantle appeared.

"Has any person called this evening? Have you let any one in?"

"No, sir," with a surprised air.

"You are certain of that?"

"Quite, sir."

"Very good. You and Maria can go to bed; I shall not read prayers to-night."

"Odd!" observed Mary Mantle to Maria Marks on returning to the kitchen; "there are to be no prayers to-night."

"And what then?" asked John Billett. "Do you expect to be burnt in your beds? I never could abide them family prayers, and the old doctor rarely axes me to come in to them, now."

"You would be a better man if you did, John Billett," remarked the cook.

"And wouldn't run home quite so fast the next time that red waistcoat of yours brings Farmer Styles's cow after you," added the

housemaid, upon which John Billet, finding that he had the weaker side of the argument, snatched up a pair of his master's shoes from the kitchen floor and made an angry exit.

The maids having retired to their sleeping quarters, Dr. Beaumont said:

"We will now go back to the study and learn more of this singular affair."

They peeped in again stealthily, but the visitor had disappeared. Laurence examined the French window; it was fastened inside; no person could have entered by that means from the garden; nor could anyone have come in by the front or back doors without being seen or heard—and the chimney was out of the question.

"It is very strange," said the doctor, looking pale—as indeed did the whole party. "What book was he reading? Humph!"—taking it up from the table—"Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*," and my paper-knife stuck in the page where he left off!"

Nothing more could be learned that night, and Laurence Westwood presently took his leave. He was some minutes in the hall with Lucy, putting on his overcoat, and lingering in the way lovers have been apt to do ever since the days of Romeo and Juliet, and perhaps, for that matter, as far back as the Creation itself.

The same thing occurred the next evening, and the bewildered trio of explorers peeped through the partly opened study door again. Yes; the old gentleman in the skull-cap was there reading in the former quiet way.

"I will try and get a glimpse of his face," said Laurence, advancing slowly (Lucy still holding on by his coat-tail). "Ahem! Sir—my dear sir!" At this insinuating summons the visitor in response turned his head and took a full view of them all, smiling at the same time with ineffable sweetness, and pointing to a spot on the floor near the French window. This was too much for their nerves; they did not calculate upon their spectral friend smiling in that agreeable manner—there was something more startling and unearthly in it than if he had frowned, or indulged in a grimace. Dr. Beaumont and Lucy backed out quickly, but Laurence recovered himself and said, in a rather tremulous voice, "Pray retain your seat, sir, but be kind enough to inform me whom I have the pleasure of addressing. Pooh, he has vanished; and the paper-knife is put into a new place."

The adventurers looked at each other in amazement.

"There is some important meaning in this," cried Dr. Beaumont. "I never believed in visitants from another world, apart from Bible authority; but our venerable friend has evidently an object in coming here, and we must do our best to fathom it. We may learn more to-morrow night, which, if he obliges us, will be his third appearance. Laurence, come—enough of marvel and mystery for the present! We have time for another game. I shall try a new opening, and Lucy can play us one or two of Mendelssohn's '*Songs Without Words*.'"

## II.

THE old gentleman in the black velvet skull-cap kept his appointment. The vicarage party, finding him so gentle and inoffensive, now entered the room with tolerable boldness. He turned partly round, and smiled even more benevolently than usual, intimating by a gesture a wish that they should all be seated. Each therefore took a chair, with a delicacy in the acceptance that bordered strongly upon the ludicrous.

"To whatever cause, my dear sir, I stand indebted for this pleasure," said Dr. Beaumont, venturing to take his snuff-box from the table; "you are welcome to my house and to the perusal of my books; pray view them as your own."

The stranger made a graceful inclination of the head, and pointed again to the spot near the window; then closed the volume, and once more vanished into air. The three wondering spectators sat breathless for a few moments, gazing at one another. Laurence was the first again to break the silence.

"I agree with you, Dr. Beaumont, that there must be a meaning in all this; and you observed, perhaps, that the spot near the window was again pointed to; have you any objection to my turning up the carpet and examining the boards? I begin to suspect that there is a hidden treasure there."

"That was why he pointed to yonder spot," cried Lucy.

"Nay," replied Dr. Beaumont, laughing; "was it not rather to intimate to me that the carpet was growing old, and to suggest an early visit to the upholsterer?"

"You are really too bad, papa," remonstrated Lucy, imprinting a kiss on her father's forehead; "I am inclined to think that Laurence is right."

"As I have your permission, sir, I shall borrow John Billett's hammer and chisel and endeavour to justify my suspicions."

"To-morrow, after breakfast, you shall make your valuable discovery—the treasure will keep till then."

The next day, however, happened to be Sunday, and nothing could of course be done in the way of excavation; but Laurence's impatience showed itself once or twice during the reading of the prayers and delivery of his sermon, by slight fits of wandering and loss of place. Lucy was equally anxious for the solving of the mystery. Their mysterious visitor, however, did not put in an appearance that evening.

"Now for it!" said Laurence, as he fell eagerly to work on the Monday, hammer and chisel in hand, the doctor and his daughter looking expectantly on.

"This end of the plank," said the curate, "you perceive, has been



sawn through, and may be raised without much difficulty so!" and as he spoke the part under his hand flew up, discovering a box underneath it of about eighteen inches in length, old and worm-eaten. Laurence drew it out triumphantly, and the doctor and Lucy's surprise and gratification were shown in their countenances.

The box was easily wrenched open, and within, lying on its side, was a magnificent silver flagon (accompanied by a chalice and paten), a little stained by time, but otherwise uninjured. There was a piece of soiled paper also bearing the following words—

"That rascall Cromwelle and hys croppe-ear'd knaves, who I heare are hovering about ye neighbourhood, shall nevyr stabell theyre horses in my church, nor sacke my communion plate; ye former I will levell withitts foundaytion first; ye latter I burye heere, where no eye but thatt of some future curatt shall ever reache it.—LIONELL VANSITTART."

A long inspection of the treasure, with appropriate remarks followed. Then Laurence begged of the doctor the key of the iron chest in which the parish registers were kept, and on referring back in a musty, dilapidated, parchment-covered, mouse-eaten old volume, he found the name of *Lionell Vansittart*. It does not appear to have been the custom in those days for the officiating minister to put his signature at the end of the entries, as is the case now; they were often most carelessly made, christenings, marriages, and burials being all jumbled together. But the name of Lionell Vansittart figured on many of the pages, and there was sufficient evidence that such a person had held the living of H—— during the troublous days of the first Charles and for a few years after.

"Ay!" exclaimed Dr. Beaumont, with sudden animation, "and I shouldn't wonder if the old gentleman in the skull-cap was the very parson who buried the plate."

The vicar's conjecture was amply confirmed the following evening by the former's presence for a few moments again in the study-chair and the gracious smile he gave on disappearing. It was observed to light, too, before he left with extra benignity upon the pair of lovers, as if in marked approval of their contemplated union.

The silver flagon—though, for reasons it is not necessary to explain here, I have indulged in a slight variation of the particulars of its discovery—may yet be seen in the iron plate-chest of the Rev. —, incumbent of H——, in Devonshire, as well as on Sundays when Holy Communion is celebrated, standing, with other sacred vessels, in all its unsullied beauty upon the table below the east window of the pretty parish church.

## THE TRAGIC MUSE.

## I.



OLD and tempest without, warmth and peace within. Dripping roofs, storm-tossed passengers, a wide wash of mud and rain on one side of the door; on the other calm and silence and eternal visions of beauty.

It was three o'clock on a wild February afternoon, and Cyril Eversleigh, weary of fighting with wind and water, turned in through the gates of Burlington House, and having recovered breath and composure in the vestibule made his way up to the galleries. He had visited the Old Masters' Exhibition many times already, and yet there were only two pictures that

he cared to look at—Sir Joshua's "Tragic Muse" and a Romney that hung not far away. The one embodied the delight of his life and the other its inspiration.

His step quickened involuntarily as he approached the sacred spot, but suddenly he paused and stood still for a moment with a startled air. Then hurrying forward he stood before the sofa that was placed opposite to the pictures that he sought.

"Lady Carlyon!" he exclaimed. "This is the first time that I have ever seen you in a picture-gallery."

"Do you think, then, that I have no love for art?"

"You love all that is beautiful; but I think of you as worshipping alone. I could never associate you with the idea of a crowd."

"At least there is no crowd here to-day," she said with a slight smile that touched the pure serenity of her face like a sunbeam.

He glanced round with an answering smile; the room was empty of all except themselves, and there was no sound but their own voices to break the stillness.

"You are right," he said, "but I am not wrong. There is no one here at this moment, but rooms that are open to the public are always crowded; they are thronged with memories of past multitudes even when they are empty of actual human beings. A classic grove or a deserted temple are the only fanes where you should worship Art."

"Do you ever own yourself in the wrong?" she asked, putting by the rest of his speech as though she had not heard it.

"Always, when you correct me," he said, and accepting an

unspoken invitation which he hoped for rather than divined, he sat down near her on the couch and fell into a sudden silence.

The presence at his side was certainly one to seize and enfold all those who came into contact with it. Many women are possessed of graceful forms, of soft waving hair and of dark eyes under long drooping lashes; but there was something in Lady Carlyon's look and bearing that marked her out as separate from all others. There was a majesty in her broad forehead and a mingled dignity and sweetness in her glance, that had made her the dream of many a poet and the inspiration of many a man of action.

Cyril Eversleigh had found his inspiration in her ever since he had first met her. His father was dead and he had come into his estates while still a minor; his house was large and lonely, and he had a strong taste for political life. He had therefore sought an early election and now spent most of his time in London, where one of his first introductions had been to the young and childless widow of Lord Carlyon, whom all London knew, all London admired, and after whom half the eligible world of London had sighed in vain.

"She will never marry again," was the general verdict. "She was born for the universe and not for mankind."

"It is just a year since I first saw you," said Cyril, breaking the silence at last. "Do you remember our first conversation? I was full of crude fancies and cruder opinions; convinced that Oxford had taught me all that books could teach, and that a voyage round the world had made me perfectly acquainted with men and manners. And then you spoke to me, and the scales dropped from my eyes."

"We all have a discipline to go through," she replied. "We are very useless members of society until we have shed our early prejudices. I know that well."

"You may know it," said Eversleigh; "but you cannot know it by experience. That is reserved for us blundering mortals. You were born on a height."

He spoke fervently; but there was no answering light in her face, and she sighed.

"You look unbelieving," he said; "but you cannot help knowing what you have been to me. Or if you do not know it, let me tell you now. Do you see that picture? I come to look at that 'Tragic Muse' that I may be reminded of you. Sir Joshua was a painter, but he was a prophet as well, for he looked through the coming years and copied the divine power of your brow upon his canvas."

There was a moment's pause as he looked at her with triumphant daring.

"You must not talk so wildly," she said at last.

"I am not wild. I speak in all sober earnestness. You have moulded and guided my life ever since I knew you. By looking up to you I have learned to estimate myself."

"That is not the true way of adjusting your focus," she said, striving to hide the slight confusion in her manner with a smile.

"It is the true way for me, whatever it may be for the rest of the world. You have taught me the one grand lesson—to look away from self—and now I want you to teach me something else. I have not seen you once this year or I should have been tempted to speak to you before; but our meeting here to-day must be providential because it seems like an accident."

A faint flush passed over the beautiful face; but he was too absorbed to notice it; nor did he see the trembling of the delicate fingers that held the catalogue.

"My life has always seemed too full to know any unsatisfied moments," he went on; "but I have found out at last that there is something sweeter than work and dearer than ambition. I am glad that I have had no time for fancies, for now the whole strength of my nature can pass into my love."

His voice lingered over the last word as though it were a note of delicious music, and its echo seemed to remain in the air after he had done speaking. Her eyes were fixed upon the floor, and there was an exquisite tremor about her lips that many a man would have given all the world to see.

"You have made my life what it is," he said; "and so I come to you now. Turn your eyes this way: do you see that picture?"

She started, but so slightly that he did not perceive it, and turned in the direction to which he pointed. No picture could be more unlike the one at which they had been looking—the sunshine of the calm English landscape, the pink-and-white of the face, the dimpled childish hands holding a flower, the mingled shyness and coquetry of the glance, all were worlds away from the passion and pathos of Tragedy! She did not speak, the flush died away from her face, her trembling lips were reset in their wonted line of firmness, and she waited calmly for his words.

"You guess my secret, of course? Yes—love has come to me at last. That is she, my sweetest rosebud! I come to look at her when I have sought the aid of my Oracle."

He pointed smilingly toward the other picture, and again he missed the quick shudder that went through the stately form at his side.

"It was only last Christmas that I met her, you know. I went down with George Atherton to his uncle's place? Rose Atherton! It sounds like a poem, doesn't it? But she is the dearest bit of human nature, and she has the prettiest little ways I ever saw. I hold to the old-fashioned idea that the husband ought to protect and cherish the wife as something too tender and precious for the rough ways of the world. I am afraid you will think that I am making myself rather ridiculous," he added, with some embarrassment creeping into his tone. "You are so far above us all that no man would ever dare to ask you to look up to him, or even dream of protecting you."

We can only lie at the foot of your throne and ask for counsel and guidance.

Her face was white to the very lips, but she looked into the eyes of glorious courage that shone into her own from the opposite canvas, and nerved herself to reply.

"What counsel do you want from me now?"

"Well, perhaps counsel is hardly the right word," he said, laughing. "The die is cast and my fate is sealed. If I had seen you a week ago I might have asked your counsel; but now I want your sympathy."

His eyes were fondly fixed on the rosebud face under the large white hat, and there was nothing in her voice to betray her.

"No interests of yours can ever be uninteresting to me," she said.

"Thank you; that is just like you! I knew you would listen kindly to my tale. But I am not sure after all that I do not need your counsel. Lady Carlyon, how can a man ever make a little creature like that happy? I have not had any womenkind, you know, and I feel myself such an ignoramus where they are concerned. You have so much tact and judgment; surely you can give me some hints?"

He spoke half-jestingly, and yet with a kind of wistful earnestness that had something touching in it, this powerful man, strong in mind and body, who looked upon his treasure as something too fragile for his rough hands to tend.

"You must ask Love to guide you," she said gently. "'A better teacher he than all.' But if you want a word from me as well, I will only say—be true to yourself, and you cannot fail."

"You have always been too kind to me," he said, rising from his seat. "I shall tell her of your sympathy; I am going to her now."

His face was radiant as he uttered the last words, but he paused a moment as he turned to go.

"You look tired," he said. "Are you going home? Perhaps if so, I may find your carriage for you?"

"No, thank you," she said, meeting his eyes steadily; "my carriage will not be here till five o'clock. You must not let me detain you."

He bowed over her hand and was gone, and she was left alone with the pictured emblem of his inspiration!

The mockery of the thought! It burnt in upon her soul like a corroding poison. "No man would ever dream of protecting you." "We can only lie at the foot of your throne and look up to you for counsel." Why had she been cursed with a power and a spirit that drew men to her as to a leader, when all the while her woman's heart beat painfully beneath the prophet's mantle, a woman's soul cried out for comfort amid the symbols of empire! It was not worship she needed, but love; not elevation upon a solitary throne, but the encirclement of tender strength and devotion.

But this was what he had told her could never be hers. The life

that would have burst into blossom in the sunlight of love must remain alone upon the desolate heights. She must bear the splendid isolation of her lot as best she could, content to know that men looked to her for light and leading, while she wandered cold and companionless, climbing the sky! Well, death at least would not shrink from enfolding her in his dark arms; he would come at last and gather her into his embrace, and she would lay her lovely head upon his breast and let him carry her away into his Palace of Silence.

She rose wearily to her feet and going up to the smiling girl leaned over the rail to look into her eyes. In her floating draperies and with the storm of passion on her brow, she might have been the Tragic Muse herself come down from her frame to visit her white-robed neighbour. But there was no fierce rage of jealousy in her face; humbly she looked at the sweet attractive figure, then with a sudden mist blinding her eyes, she bent forward and kissed the hand that held the flower.

## II.

CYRIL EVERSLEIGH had admired Lady Carlyon ever since his first introduction to her, but he had never admired her more than he did when he saw her by the side of Rose Atherton. His little rosebud vision shone out against her imperial beauty, and he pondered gratefully over the kindness that she showed with such untiring perseverance.

Rose, for her part, received the kindness carelessly. She was a spoilt child, whose parents adored her and who was accustomed to have her own way wherever she went. She had no brother to take a dispassionate view of her virtues, and her cousin George, who was the heir to her father's title, was as much her slave as the rest of her little world. She was proud of Cyril Eversleigh's good looks and of the position he held, and she found the love that he lavished upon her a delightful background for the attentions that she received on all hands.

She was quite ready to accept Lady Carlyon as one of her subjects, but any attempt to speak to her of her future prospects and duties was silenced at once. The adder may stop its ears when it is addressed with wisdom, but a butterfly can be quite as deaf if it chooses to flit away from the voice of the charmer! Rose had no intention of allowing Lady Carlyon's glowing eyes to disturb her complacency, and when she saw her lover join the eager listeners who surrounded her whenever she appeared, she shrugged her shoulders, and lifted her eye-brows, and made the air musical with her laughter!

"I wish you would talk to Lady Carlyon a little more," said Cyril one afternoon as they sat on the green chairs in the Park and watched the carriages rolling by.



"Why?" asked Rose, a slightly acid inflection marring the sweetness of her tone.

"Because she is one of the wisest women I know," said Cyril the blunderer.

"Then I certainly will have nothing to do with her," said Rose. "I hate wise women; they are always bores—unless they are witches."

"You are a witch though you do not pretend to be wise!" said Cyril, dropping the subject with discretion.

"No, I am too wise to pretend anything!" returned Rose. "I should never pretend to be disinterested for instance."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Cyril quickly.

"Nothing. That is your charge against me—that I never mean anything!"

"I have no charge against you; I love you too well. Come, dear, let me take you home before I go to the House."

"You cannot go yet," said Rose; "there is Lady Carlyon's carriage. I know you want to go and join her disciples."

Cyril flushed angrily for a moment, then looking down at the pretty figure at his side he said with quiet dignity: "I am not ashamed of learning from anyone who can teach me, but at present I want nothing but to listen to you."

Rose glanced up at him as she unfurled her fashionable parasol.

"It is very strange that anyone so clever as you are should be so stupid," she said soberly; then throwing off her wonted gravity, she laughed and chattered till the smiles broke out again upon his face.

"No wonder they are happy!" thought Lady Carlyon, as she watched them making their way across the grass.

The season came to an end at last and Parliament rose. Exhausted members slaughtered grouse upon the moors, and exhausted ladies slaughtered each other's reputations in country houses.

Cyril Eversleigh was to be married at the end of August, and he parted from Lady Carlyon with a smile and a sigh: a smile of gratitude for her good wishes, and a sigh of disappointment that her projected foreign tour prevented her from being present at his wedding.

The beauties of nature can refresh a wearied brain, but they cannot heal a wounded spirit; and much as Lady Carlyon loved them, she found that for once they failed to charm. Lakes and mountains, rivers and forests, alike passed unheeded before her eyes, and she found herself longing for the strain and stress of London, that she might forget her individual sorrows in the rush of its ceaseless river of life.

She was returning to her hotel at Lucerne one evening after a solitary walk, when she caught sight of a carriage at the door. Piles of luggage, a man-servant, a maid-servant, obsequious waiters, the bowing host, all attested to the arrival of guests of consequence, and she lingered at a little distance that she might escape the commotion.

The gentleman had already alighted, but the lady stood up for a

moment in the carriage and looked round at the lake. The gleam of the setting sun shone upon her fair hair and lit up her raiment of many colours. Surely it was none other than Rose, and even as the thought passed through her mind the sound of gay laughter rang across to her ears. She shuddered, and turning away thought wildly for a moment of hurrying to the station, taking the train to some safe spot and telegraphing for her maid to follow her. But after all there was little fear of meeting them, for she took all her meals in her private room; and even if she did meet them why should she shrink? It would only be forestalling the evil day, which at the best could not be long delayed.

So arguing with herself she made her way back to the hotel and regained the shelter of her rooms.

The next morning dawned cold and wet, and Lady Carlyon had hardly established herself at the table with her writing-desk when she was interrupted by a knock at the door.

"Come in," she said, expecting to see her maid, but she started when she saw the figure that appeared upon the threshold.

"I hope I am not intruding!" said Rose cheerfully. "I heard you were here, so I thought I would come up and see you. The men have all gone off somewhere to smoke, and it's too fearfully dull sitting alone all the morning. How long have been at Lucerne, and when are you going back to England, and who are you travelling with?"

"I am travelling alone," said Lady Carlyon, answering the last of the string of questions.

"Well, that is a thing I should never care to do; but everyone to their taste, of course. My husband likes whatever I like, I am thankful to say."

Lady Carlyon made no answer; but as long as Rose had a listener she needed nothing more.

"We have lived in one grand rush ever since we were married," she went on. "I tear about from place to place like a comet, and he comes panting behind. He says sometimes that his brain is giving way; but I tell him that he will have time enough to vegetate in the future."

"It is rather difficult to vegetate in London," said Lady Carlyon, forcing herself to speak.

"Well, of course, one can vegetate anywhere if one gives one's mind to it," said Rose. "Not that I expect to do much in that way myself; but still it quiets him to say so. I always find that I can get my own way by making promises for the future. Don't you think it is the best plan?"

"I do not get enough of my own way to be able to judge."

"How badly you must manage! I always get mine. I don't say that I never make mistakes; but I manage to get out of them again. I got out of my last very successfully, didn't I?" she added.

"I hardly know," said Lady Carlyon, rather bewildered.

"Oh, well, *I* think so!" said Rose, with a pout; "and so does George."

"George!" exclaimed Lady Carlyon, with a start.

"Yes, of course. Do you mean that you have not heard?"

"Heard what?" Lady Carlyon's voice sounded stern from her efforts to keep it steady; and Rose rebelled at once.

"Oh, if you are going to take that line, I shan't say any more!" she remarked. "That is just the kind of way that all my cousins and my aunts talked; but I didn't care a bit for any of them."

"I really do not know to what you are alluding," said Lady Carlyon.

"It is quite simple," said Rose. "I felt that it would be better to marry George, and I did."

"And where—— How——" began Lady Carlyon; but her voice died away.

"Oh! Mr. Eversleigh is quite resigned, if you are inquiring after him. We had a few misunderstandings, and I think he saw that it was all for the best. You see," she added, confidentially, "I always liked George best, only it seemed so fearfully obvious to marry him. Everyone wanted me too because of the property; and it was all so commonplace that I really could not stand it. I hate being commonplace!"

"So you exchanged one bridegroom for another at a moment's notice?"

"Yes, if you like to put it in that way. Some people said very nasty things; but I look upon myself as a public benefactor. You have no idea what an interest it was for everybody; and to George, of course, it was Paradise after Purgatory!"

"And you had no one else to think of?"

"Well, of course, Mr. Eversleigh made things a little uncomfortable," admitted Rose. "He is not a philosopher, poor fellow! But I pointed out to him what a good discipline it was, and he seemed to see it after a while. So it was all settled," she concluded gaily, "and by the time we go back to England everyone will have forgotten all about it!"

She paused for an answer, but none was forthcoming; and desperately as Lady Carlyon struggled for composure, she might not have been able to succeed if the sound of the luncheon-bell had not come to her aid.

"Well, good-bye," said Rose. "So glad to have seen you; it has been quite delightful! We shall meet in London before long."

She fluttered away without waiting for a reply; and before evening closed in she had swept her husband off to "do" the next place upon their list.

## III.

LADY CARLYON had been back in London for many months before she met Cyril Eversleigh again. An opportune demand for his presence on some West Indian estates that had recently fallen to him had enabled him to pair with an opponent who wanted to go and shoot big game as a respite from parliamentary routine.

Autumn had changed into winter and winter into spring, and spring in its turn was ripening into summer before the disappointed lover returned to his former surroundings. Long before that time Rose's prophecy had been fulfilled, and the story that had once excited so much comment had faded into oblivion. Rose's father was dead, and Sir George and Lady Atherton were an old married couple whose romantic union seemed to have taken place before the Flood.

Cyril had dreaded his return, but the reality was very different from his anticipations. People were much too engrossed with their own interests to be able to remember his, and though one or two asked him what he had been doing they did not listen to the reply.

There was one person, however, who was deeply concerned as to his welfare; but as she made no sign he might be excused for believing her indifferent. Her first greeting was cold, and her second was like unto it; and when they met for the third time Cyril's face showed nothing but a conviction of coming disappointment. He was standing in the reading-room of the London Library when Lady Carlyon entered, and had it not been that she smiled in answer to his bow he would hardly have had courage to speak to her. They were quite alone.

Even as it was their conversation was not satisfactory, for they were both conscious of a secret constraint. Lady Carlyon was longing to know much that she could not ask, and Cyril seemed to have some hidden thought that he found difficulty in expressing.

"Why do you think I came here to-day?" he said suddenly.

"I have no idea."

"To see if I could find a catalogue of the Dulwich Galleries. You look surprised; but you will understand my motive when I tell you that I believe there is another 'Tragic Muse' of Sir Joshua's there. I want to consult my Oracle again."

"Oracles are not always the best guide," she said, moving a little away from him as though to take a book from the shelf.

"They are good guides, but men do not always follow them," he replied, going a step nearer and speaking in low tones. "I am wretched, not because I have failed in my aim, but because I ever allowed it to be my aim."

"I do not understand you," she said, with a troubled look.

"Do you not? Yet it is simple enough! I know, of course, that you could never have loved me; but I ought to have been content with my devotion to you. And now, in punishment for my mistake, devotion will content me no longer. I cannot live without love; I cannot live without loving *you*!"

His voice trembled and his cheek turned white under its bronze.

"This is madness," he added, after a moment's pause. "Will you forgive me, and, if you can, forget?"

"And what if I do not wish to forget?"

The words were uttered in so low a tone that it seemed to him that he dreamt them rather than actually heard them.

"You do not wish to forget?" he said. "Do you know what that implies?"

She looked up at him. The glorious dark eyes that he had worshipped so long were veiled and tender with an exquisite shyness, and his heart beat tumultuously.

"Speak to me!" he said. "Tell me, can you ever accept my love?"

He waited breathlessly for her answer, but at last she spoke, and the words fell upon his ear with a rapture that was almost pain. "If you can accept mine in return."

It was perhaps as well that someone entered the room at the moment, for Cyril's heart was too full for any speech.

"I shall come to you this afternoon," he said. "I have an appointment at the House at one o'clock, and must hurry away now."

The statement was correct, but the appointment was never kept, for when Cyril recovered his full consciousness the Abbey clock was striking two, and he was wandering up and down St. James's Park with looks and gestures that caused the policeman on duty to cast several anxious glances in his direction.

"Why should I be singled out from all men on earth?" he said, as he stood by Lady Carlyon's side an hour later. "My happiness is almost too great, and there is only one regretful thought in my mind."

"There are none in mine," she said, softly.

He lifted her hand and pressed it to his lips, then looked at her earnestly.

"I cannot help feeling that I am bringing you down from your height," he said. "What right has any man to pluck a star from the sky to light his life with? You have crowned me with your love, but still I feel that no one ought to share your throne."

A sudden radiance illuminated her face as he spoke.

"But what if the star is trembling in its solitude," she returned; "trembling and longing for some stronger life in which to rest? And as for my throne, no one will share it, for my throne from henceforth and for ever, is—your heart!"

## THE SONG OF THE GOLDEN CITY.

From the days of St. John's Revelation  
 The marvellous story is told,  
 And down thro' the ages has come the song,  
 The song of the City of Gold.

To the innocent hearts of the children,  
 To the toilers who faint neath earth's sun,  
 To the old who have fought out its problems,  
 To the dying whose journey is done,

Comes the dream of the mystical City,  
 With colour and loveliness rife,  
 Iridescent its jewell'd foundations,  
 Flower-border'd its River of Life ;

Four-square in its symbol'd completeness,  
 Through its pearly gates shining afar  
 The strange indescribable radiance  
 Unlitten of sun or of star.

And the streets of the City are golden,  
 And the sea as of crystal appears,  
 And the sound of the harpers is in it,  
 And it knows not of sorrow or tears.

Like a mirage far out in the desert,  
 Like the fabric that fashions our dreams,  
 Like some many-hued mirror'd reflection  
 The Heavenly Jerusalem seems.

We grope 'mid the types and the shadows,  
 We fret at its veiling disguise ;  
 But our hearts cannot grasp nor conceive it—  
 Its glory is hid from our eyes.

We catch but a note of the music,  
 A glimpse swiftly passing and faint,  
 A hint of its wondrous perfection,  
 Low whisper'd to seer and to saint.

Yet the glow of it shortens the journey,  
 And our feet tread more bravely the road  
 Which leads to the sorrowless City  
 Whose Builder and Maker is God.

And thus as a gift to the ages  
 The marvellous story flows on,  
 And the heart of man rests on the vision  
 That illumined the eyes of St. John.

CHRISTIAN BURKE.



